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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — James Six [Layout design](#)
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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

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Comments

Compression Ratio

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:58 — CM Auditor

Jim

In the case of my Sahwatch Street Yard located just southwest of downtown Colorado Springs from 1880 until 1972, the primary length of the street was 1900 feet with the street being 120 feet wide. On my layout is 870 scale feet by 190 scale feet. What are the distances of your area of coverage for both the NYC and PRR?

I really enjoy the apparent reasonable distances you have the structures in the photos you have shown so far. I am following the track layout based on an 1895 copy of the Sanborn map for the area. How have you been able to accomplish the great spacing you have attained?

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Thanks

CM Auditor

Tom VanWormer

Monument CO

Colorado City Yard Limits 1895

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how much modeled?

Mon, 2013-06-03 17:19 — Jim Six

I am modeling approximately 1 mile of each RR, maybe a bit less.

Thanks for asking Tom,

jim

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Room dimensions?

Mon, 2013-06-03 18:18 — Bill Brillinger

Jim,

Your trackplan looks roomy and open. What are the general dimensions?

Would you consider adding it to the [trackplan database](#) thread?

Can you give us an idea of what typical operations are like?

- Bill

Modeling the BNML in HO Scale, Admin for the RailPro User Group, & owner of Precision Design Co.



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Here is the PRR side of the

Mon, 2013-06-03 18:37 — Jim Six

Here is the PRR side of the layout. A grain elevator and the shear manufacturing plane are seen in their roughed-in stage. Someday this will be a completed scene. As you can see, the railroad thought not done is in full service and hosts operating sessions.



James Six

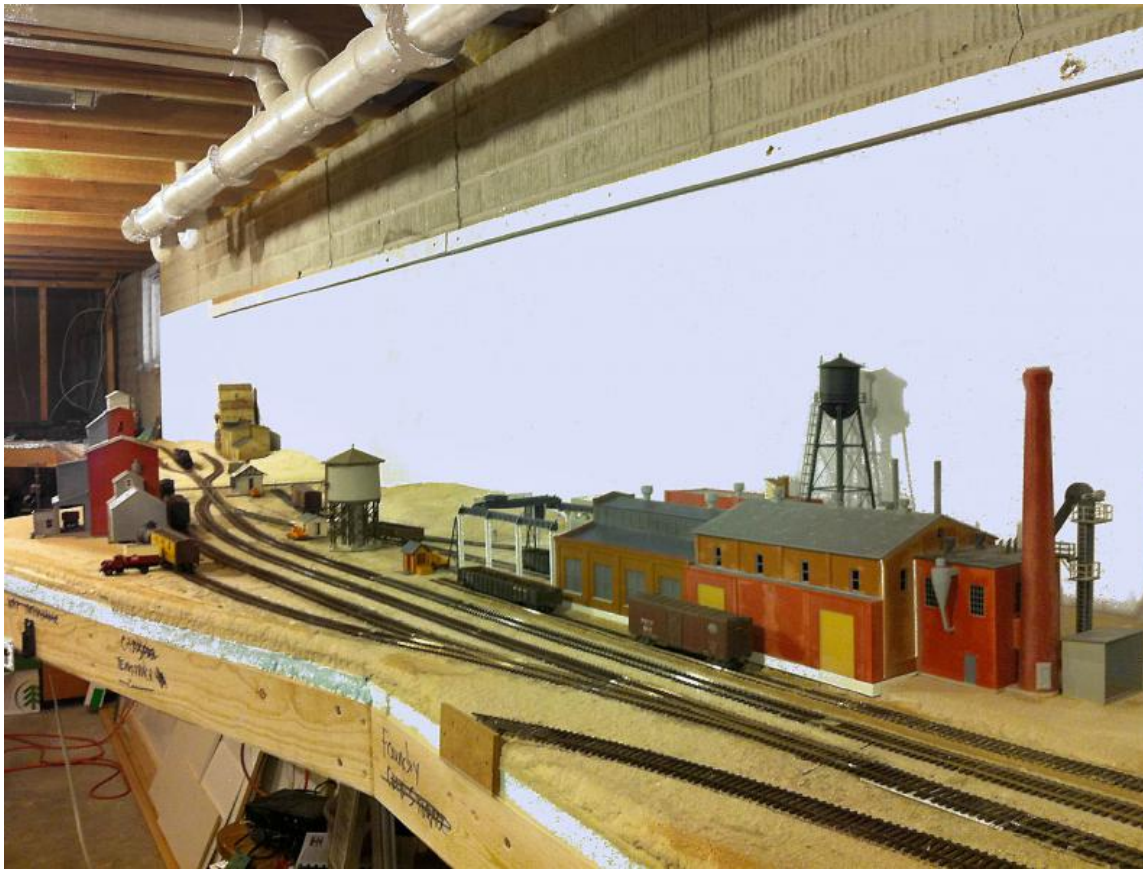
Millersburg IN

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Looking the other way

Mon, 2013-06-03 18:47 — Jim Six

Here is the same scene looking the other direction. Note: the ceiling and fascia has been installed since these photos were taken.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Reply to Bill Brillinger

Mon, 2013-06-03 18:46 — Jim Six

Counting the staging area the layout measures 12' x 44'. The PRR side is against the poured concrete wall and is a little longer than the NYC side. The open area in the middle is 8-ft from one side to the other. Note, these are older photos and progress has been made since these photos were taken.

Operation can be conducted in many ways. If I have six operators then we form three crews. One crew operates a PRR local train that comes up from Ft Wayne (the staging yard) and switches the PRR side of town. It runs across to the NYC side with transfer cars and picks up cars to take back to the Pennsy. This train completes switching the PRR then returns to Ft Wayne. It typically takes about 2 1/2 hours to do this. A similar NYC local operates the NYC side in a similar fashion. Again, about 2 1/2 hours.

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Structures

Mon, 2013-06-03 19:26 — Jim Six

As you can see I like to kitbash my structures. They are loosely based on prototype photos.

James Six

Millersburg IN

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I live in Sturgis, MI

Mon, 2013-06-03 19:13 — Dutchman

Jim,

I live in Sturgis, MI and find your Layout very interesting. I remember the K-4s on the PRR coming through and the Mohawks on the NYC in the early 50s.

Keep us posted on your progress, your looking good

Doug Van Meter

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Thanks Dan. May I ask you

Mon, 2013-06-03 19:29 — Jim Six

Thanks Dan. May I ask you questions to help me create a better model of Sturgis? Where was the PRR depot? Where might I find photos of it?

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Glad you're back, Jim

Mon, 2013-06-03 19:47 — TomJohnson

Glad you started a new blog. Everything looks great so far. Keep the photos and inspiration coming.

Tom Johnson

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Comments

New layout?

Mon, 2013-06-03 20:01 — Thomas Neuhaus

Jim, As someone who has followed your various layouts starting with the C&W , are you starting all over again? What became of the NYC layout featured in MRP? I worked on the Southern Railway in 1981 and 1982. The C&W photos were so great that I could smell the Honeysuckle and hear the Kudzu grow. Best regards with your new endeavor.

Thomas Neuhaus

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- [Ideas for a potential layout... \(Yes again I know\)](#)

Glad you're back, too!

Tue, 2013-06-04 02:30 — Tom Patterson

Jim,

I'm glad you're back, too. I'm anxious to see more photos of your progress and learn more about your operating sessions. By the way, the newer additions to the foundry at Sturgis look great and really add a sense of history to the structure.

Tom Patterson.

Modeling the free-lanced Chesapeake, Wheeling & Erie Railroad, Summer 1976

<http://cwerailroad.blogspot.com/>

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Your previous blog entries

Tue, 2013-06-04 02:56 — Virginian and L...

I have been looking for your previous entries that were recently posted on here, your layout and its updating procedures as well as your new freight car standard. Your models as always are very good and a source of knowledge and technique for the rest of us.

Could you please post a link to those entries I can not seem to find them on the website.

Thanks

Rob

Rob in Texas

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Glad your back also!

Tue, 2013-06-04 04:32 — BNSF AZ

I really enjoy looking at your layout photos your work is great!

Please keep posting.

Paul

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Me Too Glad Your Back

Tue, 2013-06-04 06:43 — richhard444

Jim, I am glad to see you are back. I have enjoyed seeing your layout photos and your models are really great. I have been to a couple of your symposiums down in Ft. Wayne and found them to offer a lot of good info, with a different take on some facets of the hobby. Not all would work for me but that is what is so great about this hobby there are many different



ways to do things as opposed to "my way is the only way" way of thinking. If you are coming up to the Div. 8 Regional Convention you are more than welcome to come and operate on my layout. Check the schedules on their web site. Or if you can't make the OPS session on Tuesday Oct.29th, I will be holding layout tour open house all three days of the convention Nov. 1 st, 2 nd, & 3 rd.

Richard Superintendent CNW Peninsula Div.

Blog - http://mrhmag.com/blog/richard_harden

Richard - Superintendent CNW Peninsula Div.

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The journey begins

Tue, 2013-06-04 06:45 — Jim Six

What I am modeling is one town - Sturgis MI. I had been modeling a section of the former NYC/Big Four Michigan Division that ran between Benton Harbor MI and Louisville KY. I've been around at model railroad building since the mid 1950s and knew that one cannot in any realistic manner model that much railroad -- although many people try all of the time. (Said in good humor) So, I started out intending to include these Indiana towns on the layout: Goshen, New Paris, Milford, Leesburg, Warsaw, Claypool, Silver Lake, Manchester, and Wabash! Now, if I had space for all of this, was twenty years younger, had a regular work crew, and tens of thousands of dollars to throw at it, this possibly could have been done. However, reality soon set in and I began to shed towns. First Silver Lake went by the wayside, then Milford, then Manchester, then Warsaw (way too big!), then Goshen. Soon I was down to just New Paris and Claypool.

Two towns seemed to work for me. Since my layout is long and narrow, I situated Claypool along one side and New Paris along the other. We operated this way for three years and always enjoyed our operations. However, two things nagged away at me until I decided yet another reduction was called for. One nag was that there was only about three feet of track (across the entry into the room) that separated the two towns which in the prototype are thirty some miles apart. That really bothered me. The other, more serious problem was that 12 (minimum) steam locomotives were needed for a complete operating session. Half of the needed steamers are available only in brass. I found and bought four of them for a cost of \$3200. That hurt, and I still needed two more. Worse yet, none could run on my DCC layout. I needed to install DCC/sound in them. Sound is a must for me. At a cost of more than \$200 for each installation for each loco and another \$200 for each paint job (I haven't time to do this myself) the total cost was pushing \$5000 for four locomotives. Sorry, but that is insane unless you are very well healed -- which I am not. There is no way I will invest that sort of expense into four locomotives -- and I still needed two more! \$7500 entered my mind.

Too much! Simply too much for me. One of my operating friends sympathized and suggested it was time for change if the layout would ever be completed. He suggested making the layout one town which would eliminate the problem with two towns being too close together! Novel concept!!! Within 24 hours I settled in Sturgis MI. This location had the NYC and the PRR cross at 90-degrees. I could have the NYC along one wall and the PRR along the other. The NYC and PRR are two of my very favorite railroads -- particularly during the steam era, 1943 in my case.

I would not be able to run through trains. This would be a game breaker for most model railroaders. In my situation it was a God-send. I would not need locomotives for through trains!!! Big money savings!!! You see, I am cheap, . . . make that frugal. I could operate with two locomotives for each railroad. Using what I already had I would have three NYC and three PRR steam locomotives (no diesels).

This was all it took for me to change setting. The die was cast and the change is underway. I am using the same layout. No bench work changes, only a few track changes are called for. The changes will be complete by August and the layout returned to service.

Stay tuned. This blog will become a record of this on-going saga until the layout is done. We will discuss construction, logic and reasoning, operation, scenery, backdrops, and more. I hope you will climb aboard for the journey.

Jim Six
Millersburg IN

James Six
Millersburg IN

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PRR Station

Tue, 2013-06-04 07:14 — Dutchman

Jim,

The PRR station was located on the north side of US-12 (Chicago Rd through Sturgis) on the east side of the tracks. I will look around for a picture that you can use, this may take some digging but I know that there are some around.

Doug

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Also glad to see you back

Tue, 2013-06-04 07:18 — numbersmgr

Hi Jim

I also am glad to see you posting again and look forward to seeing more of your modeling. I want to see more about your "less is more" ideas as well as your models. I started out thinking that a spare room layout would be ambitious, but now am even questioning that. I keep downsizing my daydreams.

Jim Dixon

A great pleasure in life is doing what others said you were not capable of doing!

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Big thanks!!!

Tue, 2013-06-04 07:31 — Jim Six

Great! My guess was close. Ill really owe you if you find any pics!

Thank you,
Jim

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Fascinating layout concept

Tue, 2013-06-04 07:42 — Ken Rice

I find the single town concept fascinating. And very different than the perhaps better publicized other approach to get a decently prototypical model in a reasonable space - Lance Mindheim's industrial branch or industrial park approach.

I'd like to see a more detailed description of your operations.

- Ken

My blog: <http://rices-rails.blogspot.com/>

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Comments

Reply to Ken

Tue, 2013-06-04 07:48 — Jim Six

I will expand on my operations concept, logic, and practice when I get home from work this evening. I'm really glad you and others are interested.

Jim

James Six

Millersburg IN

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If I was to do it over again . . .

Tue, 2013-06-04 07:58 — Jim Six

Had I to do it over again I would build the same loop, but leave out one side of the layout for a possible future addition. In practice each side (the PRR side and the NYC side) is operationally a separate layout but with interchange between the two. I could easily operate only one side and stage interchange back at the staging yard. This would allow the layout to be completed much sooner and reduce the cost to about 60% of what is taking to do what I am presently doing. In fact, I plan to stop work on one side and complete the other, then redirect attention to the incomplete side.

The point is, I have twice as much railroad that I need for myself. The whole layout is set up for six operators. Eliminating one side would eliminate two operators (one crew). I could live with that. Point is, other people interested in the one-town railroad could do this and save both space and personal resources. IMO too many of us try to build our dream layout which is simply not reasonable.

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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If I were to do it over again . . .

Tue, 2013-06-04 08:59 — nbeveridge

Well, I did do it over again, several years ago. The big change was precipitated by life events, but as it was I was somewhat unhappy with my gargantuan double deck RR with 8 towns and a yard. Too much cost, too much maintenance, too much to build. It operated well, and we had fun sessions, but it was too much. I could never have enough time or money to finish it.

Like you, Jim, I started reducing and cutting and eventually changed locales altogether, in order to simplify. I am now down to a staging / fiddle yard and one town (nearing completion, sort of), with plans to someday maybe add another town. NO YARD.

Which brings me to . . . Maybe the following simplifying idea will be controversial, but frankly I see a yard as an obstacle to pleasurable model railroad operating sessions. I came to this conclusion many years ago. In my opinion, unless you want to model just a yard to specifically do that part of operation, then get rid of the yard entirely. It is only a bottleneck. Launch all of your trains from staging. Terminate all your trains in staging. Have fun with the local switching.

Some people do enjoy yards. In fact, I do! But many people also think that a model RR must have one or it is incomplete. WHAT? Really?

Norman

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What if a large layout is the only option though?



Tue, 2013-06-04 09:15 — kleaverjr

NOTE (Not to hijack this thread, but since we are discussing modeling one town I will ask here. If the moderators and/or Jim would rather it moved as a move thread, then please inform me, and we can delete this post and I will start a separate thread, but it does tie in to the current discussion)

I am finding the arguments for modeling a single town very compelling. I for one find too many layouts too crowded, with towns on top of towns (i.e. not enough distance between towns) and the actual towns that should be spread out to be compressed to almost having a city look to them.

So here is my problem, not with how and what you are doing Jim, I find your work very inspirational, and a good friend of mine also would highly recommend me to listen to what you have to suggest and say, but here is my, perhaps quandary would be a better term.

Two of my primary "Givens" (ala John Armstrong Givens and Druthers), for my model railroad layout, modeling circa 1953, is having long trains pulled by 3-4 Diesel units (like F Units) or large steam (4-8-2's, 4-8-4's, double headed heavy Mike's etc) AND having TT&TO. And for the TT&TO aspect, I really want (not sure if this will be a Given or Druther, but i want it a Given) to have 3-4 Town operators communicating with the Dispatcher. Another Given is in the end to have the distance between towns 2x-3x as long as the longest train. This way it takes real time (not just fast time) for a train to get from one town to the next.

Though I am not against locals, and during an Op-Session, if I am called to work on it, I do enjoy working locals, but I prefer the "through freights). Especially 50+ car coal trains being pulled by a 2-6-6-2 Mallet or A-B-B-A set of F Units! So with those things that really are what keep me in the hobby, I have basically boxed myself into a corner it seems.

Now these givens may be unrealistic, but I find myself if I don't have them I don't think it's worth my time or investment to continue at least in my own layout or equipment. I belong to a MRR club which I am one of the "project leaders" for the O Scale layout, so I can satisfy my modeling itch with that, but in terms of operation, I don't see how I can do anything smaller than say what Ken M does with his soon to be (if it isn't already) Pennsylvania RR Layout. I'm not interested in being "big" but I am caught between the very valid points you make in modeling a town in detail, properly, so to focus on one town, or if a much larger space maybe two or three towns, but even that would not provide the simulation I would like. But the costs of doing it might make it impossible to achieve anyways.

I know staging can help simulate what can't be modeled but it's not the same. This is what is commonly suggested by others, and it is a very valid idea. But if that is the solution, I might as well not model at all and have a bunch of people sit at desks being operators of towns, with huge TV size video screens of actual trains passing the station (though that might be a different way of modeling "operations"). That isn't what my goal is though. So I am asking, if you would be willing to give some advice, is there something I am "missing" in my analysis in that I need a long mainline to accomplish the goals I have. Basically I'm trying to reconcile how you are modeling, which is beyond amazing, with the operational goals I seem to want.

Ken L

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" twice as much railroad that I need for myself"

Tue, 2013-06-04 09:23 — ctxmf74

Since they are two separate railroads I wouldn't view the two sides as excessive. They give a chance to model the two different scenes and different equipment. As long as each side is simple and built at a leisurely pace it seems better to have the option than to not have it. I'd probably even look into modeling the crossing or interchange if that was a featured scene for the era? To me having more layout space doesn't have to mean that one builds more complication, it can just allow more decompression of the scenes and give more room to place interesting models if they do ever get built :-). I also don't think in terms of a layout needing six operators, I just think in terms of the sequence and I might take a week to do the six jobs by myself.DaveBranum



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Reply to Ken L

Tue, 2013-06-04 09:54 — Jim Six

Ken L,

Your message is indeed related to what I am doing and I will answer with my ideas. However, following this message we do need to take it to a new topic thread. I want to keep this blog only about my layout and the ideas, thoughts, concept, design, etc., etc. Still, your message is very interesting indeed.

When I started my layout I had more than 300 locomotives in my "collection" and nearly 2000 freight cars. Today I have only four in service and four more that may someday be in service. All the others were either sold, traded, or in many cases given away. The proceeds were used to finance my layout. Same with my freight cars of which about 150 are on my roster today. My thought for you is to sell all those locomotives and you won't have need for such a large layout! I am saying this with a smile on my face but serious nonetheless.

James Six

Millersburg IN

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One town



Tue, 2013-06-04 12:36 — Virginian and L...

Some of your less is more concept will be used on the layout I am planning as well. Although it will be primarily urban in design building a section that is actually only a few miles long and of fairly narrow depth will be very beneficial. Your ideas for modeling the plains and prairies can also be used to model heavy industry, such as a steel mill and the two towns adjacent to it as well as the steep hills behind it. By utilizing your ideas I will be able to narrow the bench work and build less model railroad and still meet my goals.

Excellent concept.

Rob in Texas

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<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDmC2GjPPfARE7xdZPSJGaw/videos>

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Concept and Operation in Sturgis

Tue, 2013-06-04 13:00 — Jim Six

One or more of you asked for more information about operation on my layout. I will preface my reply by pointing out that I now have three years of operation experience on the layout. Said experience caused two significant track changes to what is now the PRR side of the layout. There was not sufficient length to the passing siding. We lengthened the passing siding by about three feet. The industrial area trackage where the shear manufacturing facility has been completely redesigned and track pulled up and re-laid. Seems no matter how much time and though is given to track design once you start operating trains things change and the best laid plans wither under pressure.

Some operators prefer lots of trains. I like that too, but operation with lots of trains calls for a larger railroad than I have space and resources for. So I had to come up with some other kind of operation. Among my fondest memories was watching a B&O 2-8-2 steam locomotive go about its tasks switching Lorain OH, the town I was born in and lived for my first ten years. Lorain was and is a steel town. There used to be plenty of on-line customers that required switching on a regular basis. During the summer I would hang out at trackside following the local train switch Lorain.

There were also plenty of coal trains into and out of Lorain when I was a kid. EM-1 Mallets would bring coal north to the coal car unloader at the mouth of the Black River on Lake Erie. Iron ore for Warren was also unloaded with a Hewlett and ore trains were hauled south. There was also a large round house that serviced the EM-1 Mallets Mikados and other steam locomotives. There were no through trains on the B&O in Lorain since it was a terminal operation. The Nickel Plate Road mainline crossed the B&O and there was some interchange operation.

So then, why am I not modeling Lorain? I would like to but there is insufficient space in my train room to do it justice . . . and it would be way too crowded. That is, TOO MUCH it too small of a space. What I am doing with my Sturgis MI layout represents that same flavor of railroad operation that I grew up with in Lorain. That is, a one-town operation without any actual through trains, though there will be "implied" through trains on both the NYC and the PRR.

Obviously my favorite train is the local train. Following the Lorain local for several years and even getting some cab rides with the crew as they went about their tasks taught me that my railroad must feature local train operation with 2-man crew. The crew goes through the motions of the real crewmen back in the days of steam. The engineer serves as what else but the engineer! The brakeman throws the switches manually just as the real brakeman did. Either the engineer or the brakeman serves as the conductor. I leave that up to the crew. Usually it is the brakeman. The really nice thing with my Sturgis operation is that I have both an NYC and a PRR local train to switch their respective sides of the layout. An added bonus is that they interchange with one another handing off and picking up cars when they use the interchange track across the end of the room.

The NYC local train can originate in the staging yard and do an out-and-back to switch the NYC side of Sturgis. Depending on the length of the local (say, more than 10 cars) the local will not complete its job in an evening (7:30 to 10:30) and will outlaw. The train will tie-up in Sturgis. The next operating session it will resume switching and eventually return to the staging yard. The NYC local is powered by one of two USRA NYC class H6 2-8-2 Mikados. The PRR local will essentially do the same thing on its side. However, there is no engine terminal on the PRR side so we make every effort to get the PRR local back to Ft Wayne (the staging yard). The PRR local is powered by either a PRR class H10 2-8-0 Consolidation or a PRR class L2 USRA Mikado.

Another feather much like Lorain in the steam era is that I have a coal train that the Pennsy ushers north from Ft Wayne represented by the staging yard. This train is powered with an I1sa 2-10-0 Decapod. Someday I will kitbash a PRR class N2 USRA 2-10-2 locomotive to share duties with the I1sa. At any rate the coal train proceeds north to Sturgis. It then takes the transfer track over to the NYC where it drops its train on one of the longer yard tracks. There is usually an empty coal train there waiting to be hauled back to Ft Wayne. The PRR Decapod will cut off its caboose and place it onto the end of the waiting empty train, then head to the turntable to be turned before coupling onto the south end of the empty coal drag. If things are moving too quickly the PRR southbound will sit in the NYC yard clogging up operation there until an imaginary PRR through train clears over in the PRR side of the layout. Once cleared the empty southbound rounds the interchange and slowly threads the PRR tracks in Sturgis and eventually returns to Ft Wayne (the staging yard) This PRR coal train operation takes about 45 minutes to an hour to complete.

I use the same two operators to handle the NYC part of the coal transfer train after they are through with the PRR train. They use either a NYC class H10B Mikado or a N?YC class Z1 USRA 2-10-2 to move the loaded coal train off the PRR east to a power plant near Coldwater MI (the staging yard). At the beginning of the next operating session the NYC crew brings an empty coal train from the power plant (staging yard) west into Sturgis to be picked up by the PRR coal transfer and the cycle repeats.

For me, this has all of the key operation I remember in Lorain back in the early and mid-1950s. Most everything I like most is included. It provides jobs for six operators. Should I only have four operators I have the option or annulling either the NYC or the PRR local, or to reduce crew size to one operator per train and run the complete operating session. Plenty of flexibility is built into this operating scheme. Everyone loves operating in Sturgis. I never have problem getting operators!

I hope this explains the concept and operation of my Sturgis MI layout. If you have questions and/or comments I would love to hear them!

Jim Six
Millersburg IN

Ps. I am not Amish. My grandfather was Amish!

James Six
Millersburg IN

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One town layouts.

Tue, 2013-06-04 13:28 — Jim Six

One town operation is a God-send for those with limited space for a layout. The concept is model a single loop and have one town in the loop and a small staging yard opposite the town. You can operate trains into the town from either direction! Have the trains set out and pick up cars on a siding, then a local switcher (station in the town) can do the switching. Or, you can have a local train stop in the town to make set-outs, pick-ups and deal with the off-spots. You can even force the local into a siding to allow a through train to pass!

I have been doing this (albeit with two towns) for three years now and never tire of it. This is a great way to spend an evening or an afternoon and do so without needing a large room or basement . . . and tens of thousands of dollars and a decade or more to complete your layout. As I pointed out (in the now deleted blog) less can be more. And, a side thought is that if the layout is smaller then it becomes reasonable to detail the layout with truly realistic scenery, backdrop, and structures -- like Tom Johnson, Tom Patterson, Mike Confalone, and others have done!

This all gets this old man excited!

Jim Six
Millersburg IN

James Six
Millersburg IN

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Thanks Jim!

Tue, 2013-06-04 14:16 — Ken Rice

Thanks for the detailed description of your operation Jim. The coal interchange is a very interesting operation, something I haven't run into before. Lots of food for thought here - I think you've shown us all a new way to look at operations on what

at first glance might seem to be a relatively simple layout.

- Ken

My blog: <http://rices-rails.blogspot.com/>

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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — James Six [Layout design](#)
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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

This blog is about my 1927 Sturgis Michigan based layout as it continues on toward completion - someday! Those following along are encouraged to make comment, suggestions, and to ask questions. The layout plan shown here has been updated to my current plan. This is your opportunity to become part of the process during development of the layout.

My other blogs will focus on what they are intended for.

- [Modeling 1900-1940 \(Was Depression Era Modeling\)](#) >> [click to view](#)
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You will find great information and discussion there. Check them out.

UPDATED TRACK PLAN - [Click on track plan to enlarge](#)



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Comments

Glad you're here

Tue, 2013-06-04 15:03 — DMR Y

Jim,

Glad your still posting Jim. I really enjoy your work, thanks for sharing with us.

Chris

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Reply to Chris

Tue, 2013-06-04 15:46 — Jim Six

I am glad to be here Chris. Thank you.

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Let's get real.

Tue, 2013-06-04 15:56 — Jim Six

I think that before getting started at building a layout we need to be realistic about what we can actually achieve. I believe that most of us are resource challenged. That is, we may want more layout than we can financially afford, more than we have time to complete, and maybe more than we have developed skills to build with. That is, I think most model railroaders overestimate what they can accomplish.

I will be 65 years old this August. I see life as being divided into four quarters much like a football game - ages 20, 40, 60, and 80. I am almost five years the 4th quarter and like pro football, I am praying for sudden death overtime! While some of you may see this as a bit morbid, I view it as being realistic. I do not want to pass on leaving a half-finished layout that I did not have time to see complete and enjoy operating it.

There is a reason we call a dream layout a dream layout. It is only a dream. Is my layout plan less than what some of you may have expected? It may not be gargantuan, but when it is complete, it will be well detailed and among the more realistic layouts in existence.

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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"I am praying for sudden death overtime! "

Tue, 2013-06-04 16:09 — ctxmf74

Hi Jim, I view 80 as the new 60. I think if you watch your diet, get regular check ups ,and exercise you'll have a great chance of reaching 80 and wondering what to model next. I'm saving the Harlem Transfer as my final little oval layout as it can be the most realistic of all..Dave Branum



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setting the mood for the layout

Tue, 2013-06-04 19:28 — Jim Six

While this is a lousy photograph it is at the same time a great picture. It shows the mood and coloration I am trying to convey with my Sturgis layout. Note the boxcar is resting in axle deep weeds. Note the light, hazy blue sky that really does not need any clouds. Note the gravel and dirt driveway. Note the peeling paint on the buildings. The Kadee PS-1 boxcar is long gone. I was modeling 1955 when this photo was taken. I since changed my setting to the summer of 1943. - Jim Six



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Jim,

Tue, 2013-06-04 16:33 — RandallG

Your modeling and photos are truly inspiring. Thank you for sharing.

Randy

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More setting the mood

Tue, 2013-06-04 16:38 — Jim Six

This photo was taken a few years ago. A photo backdrop is installed behind the structures and foreground scenery. This scene will remain on the layout after conversion from New Paris IN to Sturgis MI. Yes. I flirted with modeling an early fall setting but in the end settled on summer.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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This photo is about three

Tue, 2013-06-04 16:53 — Jim Six

You are looking down about 30 feet of layout in this three year old photo. The ceiling is in now and the backdrop has the light sky blue paint on it. The track had just been reinstalled. The layout was placed into operation for testing after this photo was taken. While the track diagram at the beginning of this blog shows the tracks going straight through town, they are anything but straight. I neglected to mention that the main track is code 70 and sidings are mostly code 55. Most all track is Micro Engineering. My DCC system is NCE.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Sturgis MI

Tue, 2013-06-04 17:11 — Art Kuperstein

Hi Jim,

Great to see your documentation and commentary re: the Sturgis MI re-incarnation of the MB. The new plan looks terrific. Thanks for sharing with us. Anticipating more.

Art

Art Kuperstein

M&PRR c.1949

Langhorne, Pa

<http://maparr.weebly.com>

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Sturgis

Tue, 2013-06-04 17:55 — jake9

My grandparents on my Dad's side were Sturgis immigrants and worked in the furniture industry there. I will be hoping to see what you come up with. Best of luck. Cheers, Jake

Cheers, Jake

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Modeling Sturgis MI in HO-scale NYC/PRR

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — Jim Six

- [Layout design](#)

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Sturgis MI 1943

This blog is for people who wish to see progress. Participants are free to make comments and suggestions and to ask questions. We will begin with my layout diagram. We will focus on Jim Six's layout past, present and projected future.



- [Jim Six's blog](#)
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Comments

Just a question...

Tue, 2013-06-04 18:18 — Dt.Cw_NSscale

I really like your drawing of the layout but I wonder what software you used to make it. All I have is AnyRail Trial that you can only place track and very little scenery.

-Dylan , The Real Youngblood of N Scale

Modeling the Wisconsin Central since 2012.

Modern Day Wisconsin Central Shawano Subdivision

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software used for my layout diagram

Tue, 2013-06-04 18:27 — Jim Six

I used Photoshop Elements. It is only a "quick-and-dirty" diagram. Can do much better if I take the time do do so.

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Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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As stated earlier, I like to

Tue, 2013-06-04 18:47 — Jim Six

As stated earlier, I like to kitbash my structures using proto photos as my guide I found many photos of a bridge crane on the internet and used a few of this photos to build this particular crane. The Walthers crane kit and Evergreen styrene were used along with parts from my buildings scrap box.

[more](#)



James Six

Millersburg IN

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another view of shear manufacturing plant

Tue, 2013-06-04 18:56 — Jim Six



James Six

Millersburg IN

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shear manufacturing plant

Tue, 2013-06-04 19:18 — Jim Six

This plant will be painted with a dark yellow brick and dark gray mortar. The annexes will be different brick color shades.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Looking good!!!

Tue, 2013-06-04 22:55 — TomJohnson

Jim. Your new blog is looking good so far. In fact, FANTASTIC!!! It seems to have a better flow and theme to it compared to your other blog. I do like your one town theme much better. Much more believable. If I had to start over, I'd do the same thing. I would model the small yard a Logansport and have 60 to 80 some feet of rural single track running over county roads and rivers (just like the real Fulton County Railroad). At the other end, I'd model one town like nearby Rochester, IN and model the grain complexes there that can handle up to 60 covered hoppers in its height of operation under NS, Indiana Hi Rail, and later Fulton County. It would all be on narrow shelves like my current L&IN. I just love the simplicity of an operation like this. Oh, there would be lots of switching at the elevators.

I sort of accomplished a little bit of that with my changes. Removing the bump outs, several roads, and some town scenes opened things up a bit and allows for more rural running before getting to the next elevator.

You'll be much more happier with your simplifications, Jim.

Tom Johnson

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Confession

Wed, 2013-06-05 07:23 — Jim Six

Confession

I have a confession to make. When I started my present layout I did not have goals that the layout was to achieve. While I preach today that one should have goals before starting spending money and committing time, I was not there yet when I started. It took me nearly six years before I came to that realization.

One goal of this blog is to share my experiences and my layout with others. Another is to help others to not repeat the mistakes I have committed along my journey. Because I only had a "vision" and no concrete, well defined goals when my journey began, I made several mistakes that have cost me money and time, not to mention causing grief among my operating friends.

Not identifying my wants and desires along with my limitations has hurt and probably pushed back completion of the layout at least two, maybe three years. Had I identified and listed the things I really wanted and included what it might take to have each want, then things would have been different. I may have started with Sturgis and not started out trying to include eight different towns along a 60 mile stretch of railroad!

I should have started with a "wants analysis", then followed it with a "needs analysis" of what it would take to meet my wants. This would have eliminated many of my wants as not practical or reasonable. For instance, my dream layout had long included the NYC four-track mainline across northern Ohio (my birthplace). Yeah. Right. That could never happen with my lot in life. I do not have Steve Jobs kind of money or time! For that matter, analysis of what it would take to include my original eight towns would have made clear that this too is not workable within the constraints I have to work.

I guess this all boils down to a simple principle of "think before you act". I didn't, and I am paying for it. I will not tell anyone what to do That ticks off too many people . . . LOL. . . , but I am trying hard to make anyone interested aware of my short comings and offer solutions and alternatives.

James Six

Millersburg IN

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G&D

Wed, 2013-06-05 07:44 — LKandO



I should have started with a "wants analysis", then followed it with a "needs analysis" of what it would take to meet my wants.

Givens and Druthers

Alan

All the details: www.LKOrrailroad.com Just the highlights: [MRH blog](#)

When I was a kid... no wait, I still do that. HO, 28x32, double deck, 1969, RailPro

[flickr](#)

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" the NYC four-track mainline across northern Ohio "

Wed, 2013-06-05 10:59 — ctxmf74

Couldn't a person still build that in a small space if that's what they really wanted? Say pick an interesting mile of it ,maybe where it crosses another railroad or goes thru an industrial area for some local switching action, then just run trains thru from circular staging connecting each end? I remember seeing an area of Fresno along the old SP in the 50's when my folks would drive thru town, there was the main line, maybe two or three parallel sidings and spurs connected by crossovers and lots of industries looking both north and south from the grade crossing. There was always a switch engine or a road freight or passenger train in sight and lots of neat stuff to model. So that one grade crossing and the view both directions could be a complete layout with staging at the ends..DaveBranum



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That's how progress works

Wed, 2013-06-05 11:48 — joef



I have a confession to make. When I started my present layout I did not have goals that the layout was to achieve. While I preach today that one should have goals before starting spending money and committing time, I was not there yet when I started. It took me nearly six years before I came to that realization.

Jim, that's how learning based on experience works. Nobody is "born" with experience. We all learn by making mistakes and then sharing what we learned with others. There should be no shame in that.

Hopefully, the next guy can learn from our mistakes and not start at zero. Over time, we build up a collective knowledge that ever increases the starting point so it's further down the path than it was for previous generations. We end up standing on the shoulders of those who preceded us, as it were.

It's called "progress".

Joe Fugate

Publisher, Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine



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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — James Six [Layout design](#)
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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

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You will find great information and discussion there. Check them out.

UPDATED TRACK PLAN - [Click on track plan to enlarge](#)



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Comments

Resurrecting Jim's other blog threads

Wed, 2013-06-05 12:19 — joef

Jim has asked that we resurrect his freight car thread so we've pulled backups and can locate the thread. However, we need to stand up a duplicate instance of this site to see the data and pull it out for posting over here.

Look for that thread to re-appear in the next few days.

Joe Fugate

Publisher, Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine



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- U30B Weathering
- Walthers tank car loading platform
- A diesel on my steam layout. Bachmann 70 Ton

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looks great jim

Wed, 2013-06-05 13:49 — minrr

Keep up the great work and please keep on sharing your progress.

Q

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Modeling a Cement Plant

Wed, 2013-06-05 17:22 — Jim Six

One of the rail-served customers on the layout is a cement plant. It is based on a boyhood memory of such a plant in Lorain OH pictured here. I am using this photo to build my model. While this photo is my inspiration I have had to do a lot of research in order to learn how cement plants work -- particularly older plants back in 1943.





James Six

Millersburg IN

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Building the model

Wed, 2013-06-05 17:14 — Jim Six

There is no kit for this model shown here on the "roughed-in" stage. All parts came from my buildings scrap box.



James Six

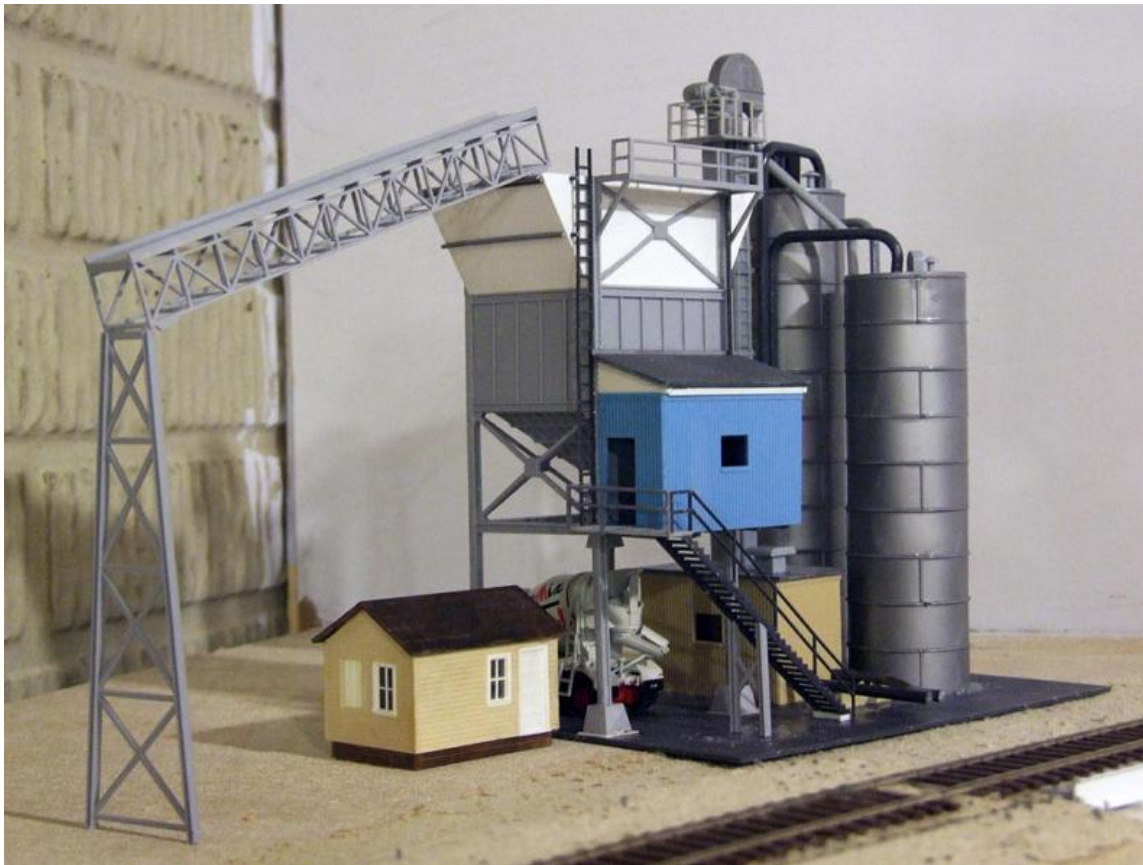
Millersburg IN

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Looking at these pics gets me

Wed, 2013-06-05 17:17 — Jim Six

Looking at these pics gets me excited all over again. Once the area of the where it will be located (on the NYC side of the layout) it will be painted and weathered, more detail added, then installed and scenery installed about it.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Proto-based modeling

Wed, 2013-06-05 17:21 — Jim Six

While I do not use comercial kits (as they are intended) I create my own kits from left over components and parts and assemble using proto photos are a loose guide. I do enough research to make sure the facility would represent how the prototype works. I call this prototype-based modeling, although this certainly is not prototype modeling.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Cement(concrete batch) plant

Wed, 2013-06-05 17:39 — fecbill

Jim

I like your small concrete plant. I remember the small Rinker plant in my home town of Lake Worth, FI served by FEC. They would spot gondolas of rock and Rinker unloaded them with a dragline type crane on tracks (like a bulldozer has). They unloaded into piles and then conveyed, IIRC, to the mixing structure. Also had a small concrete block building at the end of the spur to unload boxcars of other material. Usually had six gondolas spotted.

Bill Michael

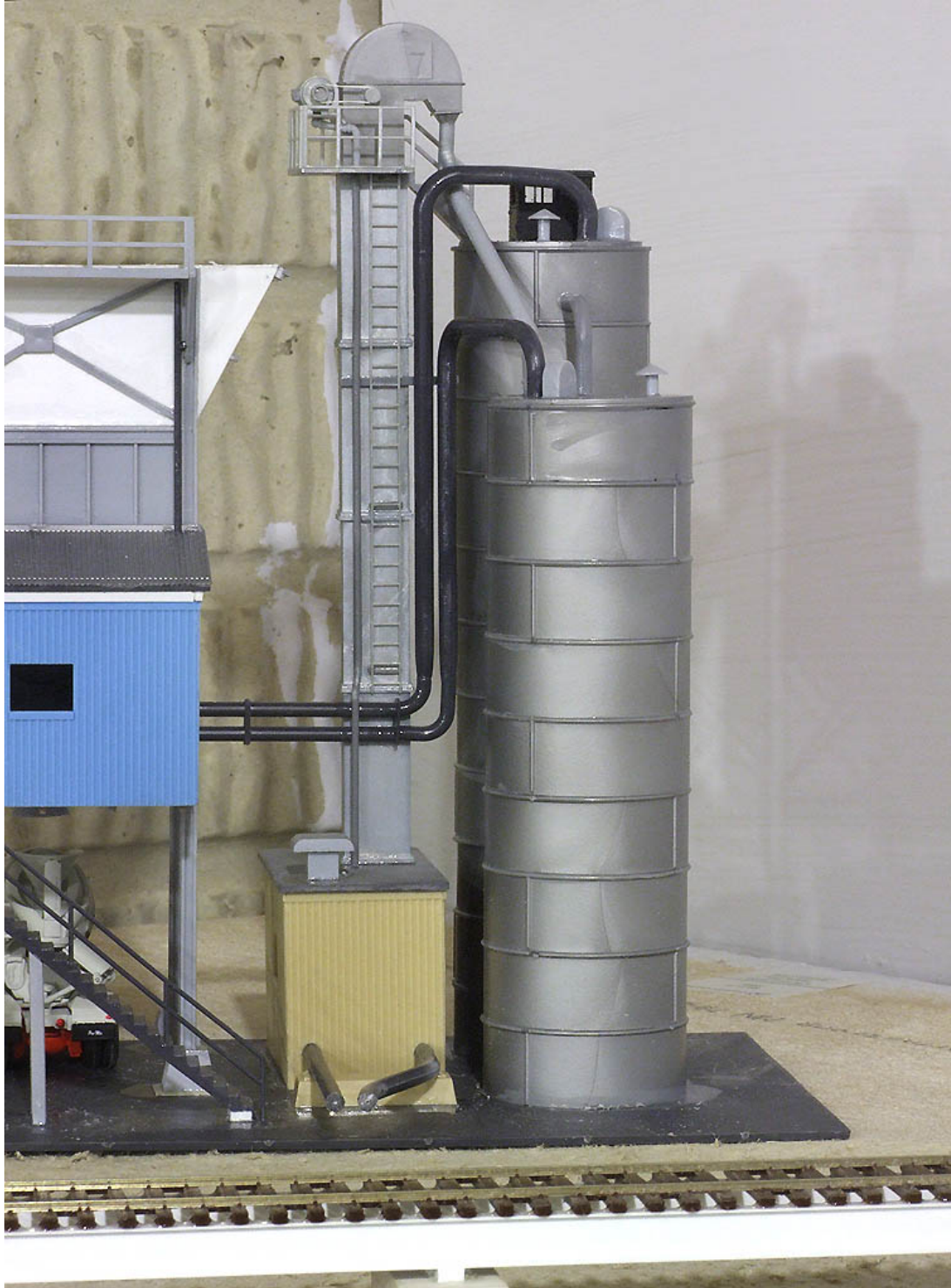
Modeling FEC in 1960

Bill Michael

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(No subject)

Wed, 2013-06-05 17:51 — Jim Six



James Six

Millersburg IN

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(No subject)

Wed, 2013-06-05 17:53 — Jim Six



James Six

Millersburg IN

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(No subject)



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — James Six [Layout design](#)
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Wed, 2013-06-05 17:55 — Jim Six

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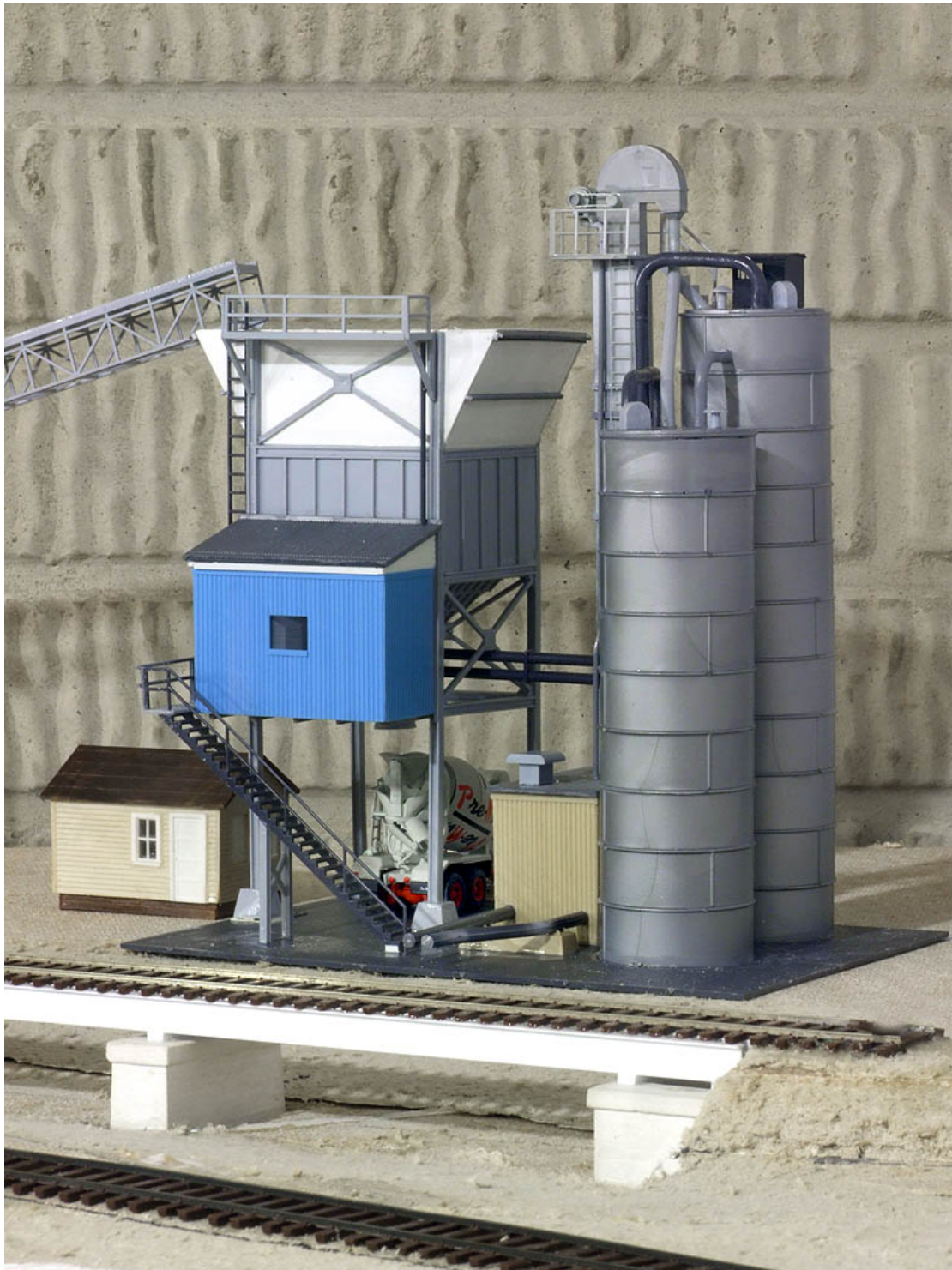
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James Six

Millersburg IN

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Wed, 2013-06-05 17:57 — Jim Six



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Wed, 2013-06-05 17:58 — Jim Six



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Cement Plant

Wed, 2013-06-05 19:48 — wp8thsub

That's my kind of industry Jim. I like the in-progress photos that help show where all the parts came from.

Rob Spangler [MRH Blog](#)

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The Right Feel

Wed, 2013-06-05 20:21 — AlanR

Jim, terrific model for the cement plant - it could be an article in itself on how it worked, too! The model captures the feel of the original extremely well! Looking forward to seeing more.

Alan Rice

Amherst Belt Lines / Amherst Railway Society, Inc.

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Cost of painting and detailing locomotives

Wed, 2013-06-05 20:44 — Virginian and L...

Jim, after reading many of your articles in all of the magazines and marveling at the great detail work on the locomotives you built I am flat out astounded that you could hire someone capable of doing work that would compare to yours, at any price.

I'll surely be along for the journey and be keeping the rest of my club members up to date as well. Keep posting as I'm sure the majority of us enjoy your work even though it might embrace something other than what some of us our modeling.

Rob

Rob in Texas

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Tangent to subject

Wed, 2013-06-05 21:10 — Virginian and L...

Jim

Since your initial blog was pulled down but the freight car blog will be back I'll tell our mutual friend Tom Bailey he is not going crazy and that it did disappear for a while and has in fact been replaced with a new one. We spent quite a bit of time discussing your layout and model building after Saturdays session at the club. Your ears were not burning because the discussion was very favorable and we are both avid followers of your work.

One of our members has been redoing the club back drop and I suggested he look at what you had accomplished on your previous rendition of your layout but he missed it. I as I am sure many others would like to see those photos back up as well at least in archive form as they are very valuable for both technique and inspiration as well as just being nice to look at.



Rob

Rob in Texas

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Reply to Rob

Thu, 2013-06-06 06:13 — Jim Six

I will do a series of posts about the photo backdrop process I use. I have it well developed and have conducted a few dozen workshops for the NMRA on the topic. Ill donor right in this blog.

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Another reply to Rob

Thu, 2013-06-06 06:30 — Jim Six

Interesting that you mention that I am contracting out worm on my one remaining brass steam loco. Yes, I could paint and weather it myself. Unused to paint and weather brass steam for hire. Done many. However, this is complicated by the need to install the Tsunami DCC/sound system which I don't do. I could learn but building the layout coupled with my work situation I don't have time for it. Besides, Chris Thompson is going to do the work for me. I know of nobody that is better. His paint and weathering is at the very least as good as my own.

The older I get the more valuable time becomes. I said earlier that I will turn 65 this August. My goal is to have the layout complete before I turn 70. That way I can just "play trains" ang get back to building models to a higher standard again.

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Reply to Alan

Thu, 2013-06-06 06:31 — Jim Six

I plan an article on this cement plant for MRH Magazine.

James Six

Millersburg IN

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"an article on this cement plant for MRH Magazine"

Thu, 2013-06-06 10:21 — ctmf74

The model looks great. For those that don't know the article should probably point out that they don't make cement at this type of facility, they just mix cement with sand and rock to make concrete . A cement manufacturing plant would look quite different..DaveBranum



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- [Ideas for a potential layout... \(Yes again I know\)](#)

Reply to Thomas Neuhaus

Thu, 2013-06-06 12:40 — Jim Six

Thomas Neuhaus asked what ever happened to my layout that was featured in MPR a couple of years ago.

About three years ago when the track was complete and wired we began operations to test what had been created. While the New Paris (now NYC Sturgis) always worked well, the Claypool (now PRR Sturgis) had issues and was rebuild three times. Now part of it will be rebuilt again. We have had a total of 27 formal operating sessions. All were fun, but all resulted in issues in my mind.

My present layout is the same layout with some changes to the track arrangement and overall concept. The trackage in what is not the PRR side of the layout was changed somewhat to better accommodate trains passing. The passing siding was not long enough. That side of the layout is undergoing a few more minor changes, particularly at the room entrance where the interchange will be with the NYC.

The former New Paris IN (now the NYC side of Sturgis) is undergoing similar changes at the room entrance also to accommodate the 2-track interchange with the PRR. The peninsula area near the furnace and water heater is to have all track removed and re-laid for the concrete mixing plant, the gravel pit, and a furniture manufacturer.

Eventually the staging yard will be rebuilt and simplified. It was serviceable but never complete.

The lesson learned in this is that I overestimated what I could fit into my given space and still attain the results I was and remain after. I simply crammed too much into the layout. While many visiting model railroaders marveled over the "openness" of my layout, I saw it as "operationally" crowded. That's why I went from 8 towns to 6 to 5, 4, 3, 2, and now one town -- Sturgis.

Back to your question, it's the same layout, but modified. No bench work was changed until now. I am removing the "bump-outs" that were there for structures. They caused problems reaching into the layout to uncouple cars and to throw switches. When they are gone it will be much easier to do the above

James Six

Millersburg IN

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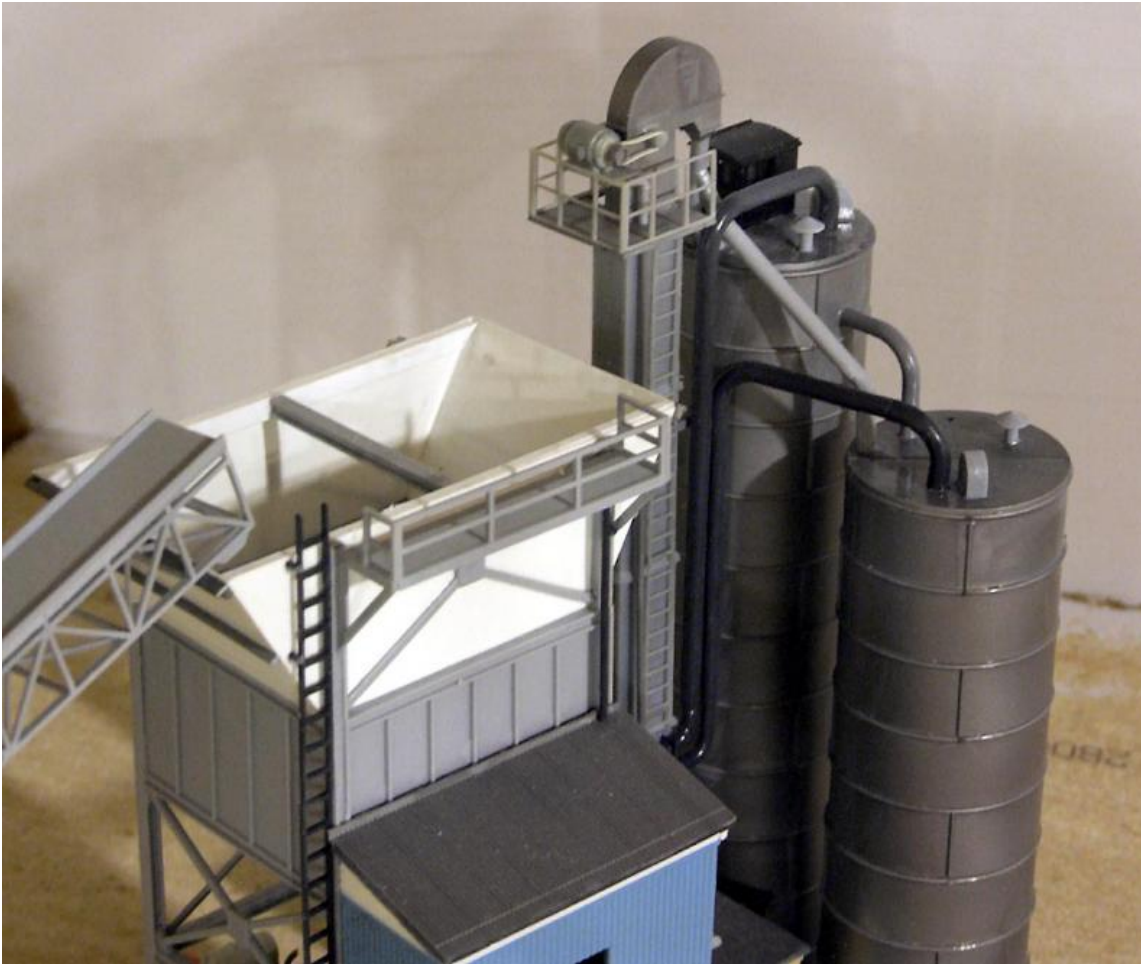
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Continuation of the concrete plant

Sat, 2013-06-08 06:41 — Jim Six

I will close out the concrete plant photos with close up views of the details. Later, when the facility is complete and installed we will resume with finished model photos.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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The following pics were

Sat, 2013-06-08 06:48 — Jim Six

The following pics were taken a few minutes ago using my iPhone 4s. They are better than the "real camera" photos!



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Sat, 2013-06-08 06:53 — Jim Six



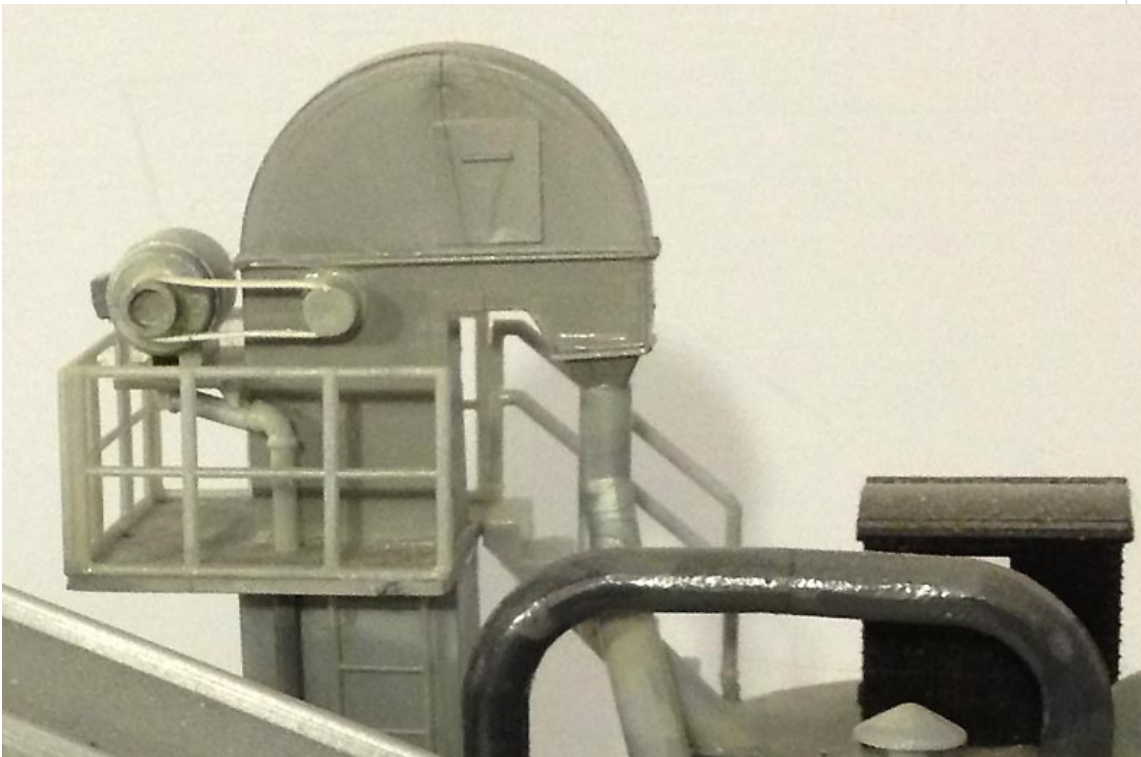
James Six

Millersburg IN

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Sat, 2013-06-08 06:55 — Jim Six



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Sat, 2013-06-08 06:59 — Jim Six



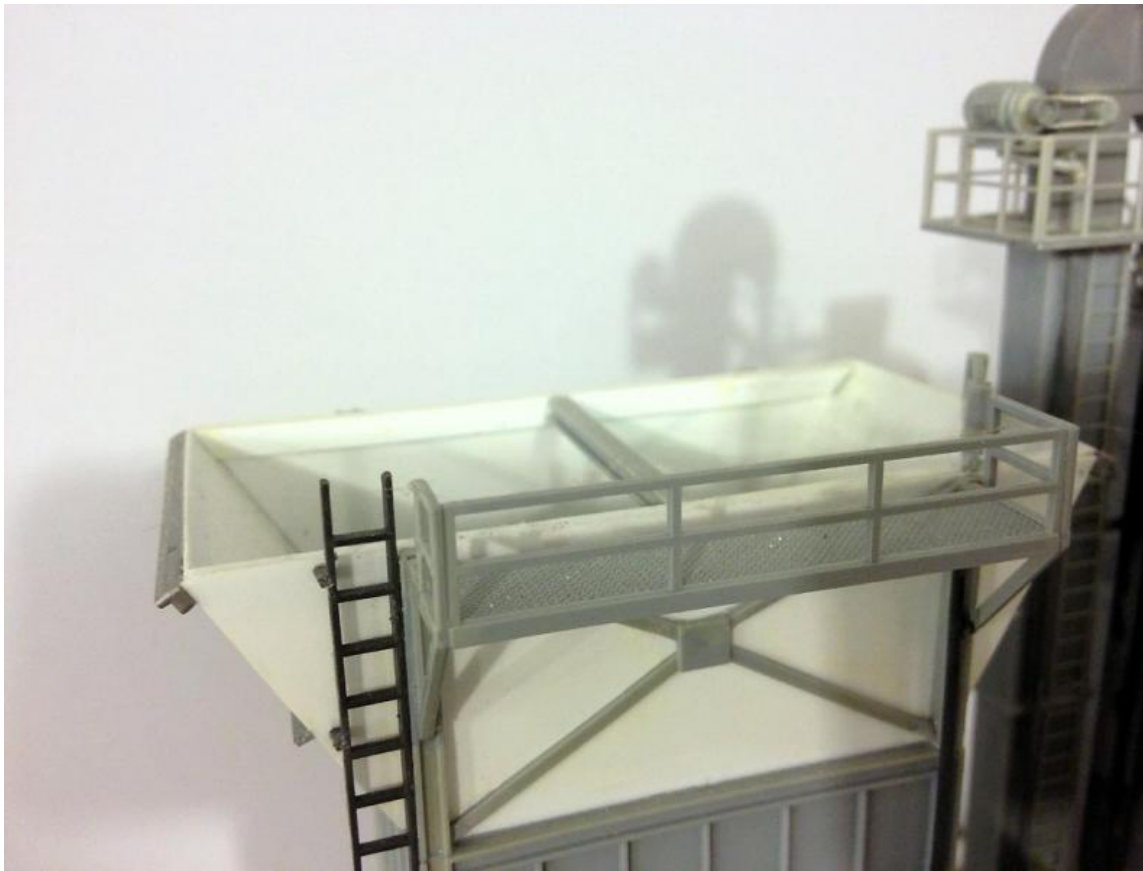
James Six

Millersburg IN

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Sat, 2013-06-08 07:02 — Jim Six



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Questions

Sat, 2013-06-08 07:05 — Jim Six

If anyone has questions or would like to see this model from a different perspective please ask. I am looking for feedback/input to help me make this model all that it reasonable can be.

Thanks,

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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The whole facility

Sat, 2013-06-08 07:27 — Jim Six

Here is a view that shows the entire facility.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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UPDATED TRACK PLAN - [Click on track plan to enlarge](#)



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Comments

[compressor house](#)

Sat, 2013-06-08 07:30 — Jim Six

Here is the compressor house that lifts the cement from the covered pit under the track and blows it to the mixing plant.

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- Working on the Railroad....Again....update. sorry....here are the piccies
- Working on the Railroad....Again....update

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James Six

Millersburg IN

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front end loader

Sat, 2013-06-08 13:03 — Jim Six

Here is the Woodland Scenics front end loader (white metal kit) that moves aggregate about the facility.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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1943?

Sat, 2013-06-08 10:57 — ctxmf74

That model would represent a very modern facility in 1943 wouldn't it? The older plants I recall from my childhood were wooden construction with chain type conveyors. A lot of the concrete in 1943 was mixed on site from aggregate and bagged cement so redi-mix facilities were not as common or well developed as they are today....DaveBranum



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How old?

Sat, 2013-06-08 11:45 — Jim Six

Good question. I did a lot of research and found that facilities like mine first appeared in the late 1920's. However, they did not start to become widely used until the late 1930s. It was post WWII that they had become the norm. These so-called ready mix plants were typical throughout the 1940s. Larger facilities of this type began to show up after 1960.

My conveyer looks good but is questionable. I need to Do more research.

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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How old is it?

Sat, 2013-06-08 13:07 — Jim Six

Here is an older ready-mix plant of the type I am building. Note the vehicles.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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I just love that old coupe in



Sat, 2013-06-08 13:21 — George J

I just love that old coupe in the picture! I looks like they removed the trunk lid and added some kind of a box to it to make an impromptu pick up truck!

What a great little kitbash project that would make.

-George

"And the sons of Pullman porters and the sons of engineers, ride their father's magic carpet made of steel..."

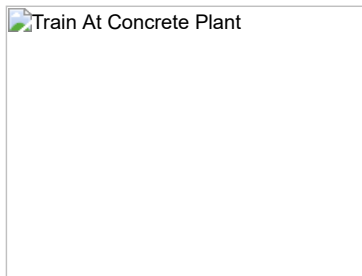
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Dams

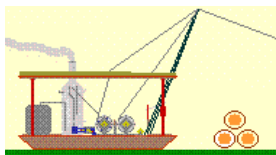
Sat, 2013-06-08 13:25 — Logger01

There were many temporary "Ready Mix" concrete mixing facilities built to support the construction of dams in the 1930's. I have some books around somewhere with construction pictures showing facilities at Norris, Fontana and other TVA dams, all although larger looked similar to Jim's model. From the write up TVA bought covered hoppers to for suppling bulk cement to the dam sites. Online I was able to find this one small grainy image of one of the concrete facilities for the Hoover Dam.



This would make a nice model with the high, stub tracks for sand and gravel and the concrete silos in the background.

Ken K



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Lookin' Good



Sat, 2013-06-08 19:15 — JC Shall

Jim, I think your model is coming along nicely. I plan to build a batch plant for a spot on my layout sometime down the road, so I'm looking forward to seeing your completed installation. Your model is right along the lines of what I had in mind.

-Jack

[Louisiana Central Railroad](#)

Turn table and steam loco service

Sun, 2013-06-09 07:52 — Jim Six

One thing that I am trying to avoid is modeling the "dramatic". From my perspective a lot of model railroads model the dramatic -- which goes hand-in-hand with "too much". I see lots of steam era layouts with a large roundhouse and too many locomotives. Again, this is just my opinion based on what I like. One way to avoid over crowding and adding things to the layout is to carefully determine what you need to support the type of operation you want and model only to support that operation and not create a place on the layout to display the collection if unneeded locomotives you may have.

I have a turntable to install on the NYC side of the layout. You can see it on my track diagram at the top of each page in this blog. This turntable serves one purpose, that is to turn locomotives. There will be no engine house because this is not a locomotive facility. Sturgis is a terminal point for operation on my layout and locomotives will have to be turned in order to head back to where they came from. In addition to the turn table there will be a water tower and coal loading capability to top off the tender.

This photo is what I am modeling from. While the actual location is on the NYC Putnam Division in New York, it typifies what you could have found around the NYC system. Note the ground cover. This will be modeled in my layout. I find such photos inspirational but also instruction for what I will model and compare to making sure I have met my goal.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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more steam loco facility

Sun, 2013-06-09 08:18 — Jim Six

Here is another proto photo that I am using to guide my modeling. Note that there is an ash pit on the same track as the coal loader. I need this for my layout in order to fit an ash pit. If they have to be on separate tracks, then I will not have an ash pit.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Modeling Sturgis MI in HO-scale NYC/PRR

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — Jim Six

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Sturgis MI 1943

This blog is for people who wish to see progress. Participants are free to make comments and suggestions and to ask questions. We will begin with my layout diagram. We will focus on Jim Six's layout past, present and projected future.



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[One more look at a small locomotive facility with turntable.](#)

Sun, 2013-06-09 08:43 — Jim Six

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James Six

Millersburg IN

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RE: The cement plant

Sun, 2013-06-09 09:56 — TTX101

It looks great (like every photo you post - please show us the progress!) Regarding the year 1943, those silos are tall and probably highly visible. Any thought to wartime advertising (Buy War Bonds; Sabotage can Outweight Production; that sort of thing)?

I really like industrial models, and this is going to be a great look industry!

Rog.38

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Very nice modeling Jim

Sun, 2013-06-09 10:09 — skiwiggy

Jim,

It looks like you will have just enough to convey an engine servicing facility without all the excess that your trying to avoid. Very nice modeling you have going on. You can put an ash track on whatever track you might like since it is your servicing facility and it will still look close to the prototype. That is a neat looking coaling tower since it has interesting roof lines to make for a unique model over models that are offered. It will be a good kitbashing project.

Greg

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Engine service

Sun, 2013-06-09 10:48 — fecbill

Jim

I really like the engine service areas and I agree with the "small" idea. Two railroads that interest me, but I am not modeling, are the Southern's Murphy Branch and the SAL line from Wildwood to Orlando. On the Murphy of course engines were serviced in Asheville but on the branch facilities were very small, a hopper of coal spotted over a conveyor for coaling locomotives and a few water tanks. Engines layed over in Murphy and there were no facilities there.No turntables on branch..locomotives turned on wyes.

For SAL at Wildwood: Wildwood was a major junction on SAL in Florida but the roundhouse was only five stalls and only had walls half way up....that part of Florida is real hot and muggy in summer (read at least 6 months ☺).

On the railroad i am modeling the FEC on the 5th district after the 1935 hurricane when Oversea line was ended at Florida City, engines were serviced at Buena Vista(yard in Miami) and again engines turned on a wye in Homestead. By my era, 1960, the GP7s, 9s and BL2s did not need to be turned.

Bill Michael

Bill Michael

Modeling GST, generic southern town, circa 1950-62

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RS-3 picture

Sun, 2013-06-09 10:55 — Virginian and L...



Looks like the tail lights of a 1955 or 56 Chevy behind the box car. The place looks like it is very seldom used which would be typical of the end of a branch line. The elevated track has two cars on it a box car and a tank car, with that location is it likely that they are in company service, fuel storage in the tank and supplies for the terminal in the box car?

Rob

Rob in Texas

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Locomotive on turntable

Sun, 2013-06-09 11:05 — BOK

Jim you are right on the minimal engine facility.

That picture of the NYC engine, turntable, water tower, maybe a small sand house and possibly, a Red Devil, coal conveyor is all one really needs for a small but active steam facility. I like simple and this photo captures it.

Thanks for posting it it really made my Sunday afternoon.

Barry

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1950s IC steam facilities Bloomington, Ill turntable

Sun, 2013-06-09 19:57 — BOK



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1950s IC steam facilities Bloomington, Ill coal and sand

Sun, 2013-06-09 20:02 — BOK

Here is another photo of the same engine servicing area showing the coal facility.

Barry



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1950s IC steam facilities Bloomington, Ill sand house

Sun, 2013-06-09 20:15 — BOK



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Boxcar

Sun, 2013-06-09 20:28 — Bill Brillinger

Is it possible that the boxcar in Jim's photo is supplying sand?

- Bill



Modeling the BNML in HO Scale, Admin for the RailPro User Group, & owner of Precision Design Co.



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Modeling Sturgis MI in HO-scale NYC/PRR

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — James Six

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Sturgis MI 1925-1935 - One Town Layout

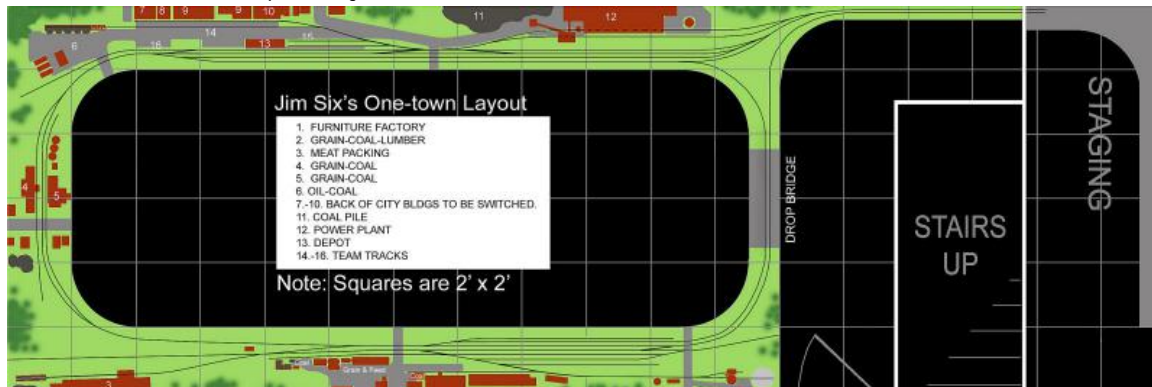
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I am guessing it's providing

Sun, 2013-06-09 20:34 — BOK

I am guessing it's providing barrels of lube oil and other supplies but it could have also been loaded with bags of sand.

Barry

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Shear manufacturing plant

Sun, 2013-06-09 20:41 — Virginian and L...



Jim very nice model but I have a question regarding the traveling crane on the outside of the building. What would such a crane be used for on the prototype? It does not appear able to run into the building so use in material handling does not seem possible inside the building. On the outside of the building it appears only suitable to move items out of the railcar and into another railcar or a truck and this appears to me to be of dubious value to the manufacture of shears. I am not familiar with this industry or how it is supposed to operate and would like a future entry to cover the workings of such an industry. I am thinking that since you were building a model of one you likely had a pretty fair idea of how it worked.

I have an interest in this as we may want to add a model of an industry like this to our club layout as we have room for a few more industries and this looks like it would be a good addition.

Rob

Rob in Texas

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return of jims blogs

Sun, 2013-06-09 20:55 — Virginian and L...



I am quite pleased that you folks are going to do that. When it comes back can you folks have a search index for the blogs, for example if I am trying to find Tom Patterson's blog or Jim Six's blog or blog entries for the richlawn railway it would be nice if the search engine would take me to them. I tried for example Jim Six and got everyone named jim but jim six and everything that had the number six in it. I have since book marked his page and wish I had spotted that feature earlier. I just wish the blogs could also be covered with the search engine as well as a lot of the folks that are attracted to this site are also excellent modelers and have lots of great ideas to share.

In many ways this place is not just one free high quality magazine but several when the forums and blogs as well as links to various other sources are taken into consideration.

I have been enjoying the magazine since I first found it and think you folks are doing a great job.

Rob

Even the adds are good, I particularly like the click to go to their website feature.

Rob in Texas

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Great photos

Mon, 2013-06-10 05:21 — Tom Patterson

Jim,



Those photos of the NYC engine facility are fantastic! There's so much detail to be found in them, and the fact that they are in color is even better. Note the yellow pipe railing, the subtle weathering on the sides of the turntable walls, the ground cover in the turntable pit. Great stuff! As a proto freelancer, I'm always looking for photos like this for ideas for my railroad.

I have saved the photos to my engine service facilities picture file for future reference. Thanks for posting these!

Tom Patterson

P.S. That front end loader look awesome- great job on the weathering!

Modeling the free-lanced Chesapeake, Wheeling & Erie Railroad, Summer 1976

<http://cwerailroad.blogspot.com/>

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What Tom Sez



Mon, 2013-06-10 19:31 — JC Shall

All of those photos posted of engine facilities are great. In my younger days I used to always exclaim to a friend, "Man, that's just reeking with atmosphere!".



-Jack

[Louisiana Central Railroad](#)

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Blending 3D scenery with a 2D photo backdrop

Tue, 2013-06-11 16:35 — Jim Six

I tease you a bit with a preview of how I blend a photo backdrop with my 3D scenery.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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more background blending

Tue, 2013-06-11 17:00 — Jim Six



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Running through the weeds

Tue, 2013-06-11 17:32 — Jim Six



James Six

Millersburg IN

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More blending into backdrop - with road into wall

Tue, 2013-06-11 17:35 — Jim Six



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Not complete at left

Tue, 2013-06-11 17:37 — Jim Six



James Six

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Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — James Six [Layout design](#)
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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

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Road blending

Thu, 2013-06-13 09:35 — Jim Six

Hi Greg,

All of the backdrop is photo. However, where the road meets the backdrop Tom Johnson and I built up a "fillet" to transition from the 3D road onto the 2D backdrop photo. We painted both the 3D road and up onto the photo a bit in order to make as good a blend as possible. Tom and I do this with all of our roads that go into the backdrop. Without the fillet, there is always a "kink" where the 3D road meets the backdrop.

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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link

Fri, 2013-06-21 17:11 — kurmujiin

Hi Jim, I don't know if you have seen this or whether it is of value, but I stumbled on this link after reading your blog so far and thought I'd pass it on. <http://www.trainorders.com/discussion/read.php?11,2492600>

I also have some questions. Reading your approach has rekindled a lot of interest on my part. I, too, have a sentimental link to the NYC. My Grandfather was an NYC passenger agent based out of Utica between 1912 and 1957. I'm looking at the 1940s for a period to model. That way I can run either lightning stripes or steam or both. I also want to model something closer to Utica or Rochester (where I grew up). I'd love to have a way to run an occasional Hudson with not too long a string of heavyweights, maybe stopping to drop or pick up a pullman or two. Other than that, I love your approach to a single town. Can you offer a suggestion on how to approach selecting the town to model? One site I'd considered is Troy station with its towers over the mainline and three railroads participating. But with six tracks, it might be a bit ambitious and might take too much real estate to also have some of the countryside feel of Sturgis. Thanks (Wayne Essel)

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Operating Between Operating Sessions

Mon, 2013-07-01 11:22 — Jim Six

I just read Tony Koester's *Trains of Thought* column in the August Model Railroader Magazine. Tony and I are close friends in a friendship that goes back to the mid-1980s. I religiously read his column in each issue of MR. However, this time I have a personal problem with what I read.

While good friends, Tony and I have different philosophies about what we want model railroading to be for each of us. It is obvious Tony is modeling a "transportation system" – Tony's words. I am not interested in modeling a transportation system. I have interest in modeling only one setting and the RR jobs that worked this setting – in my case it is Sturgis MI. Tony points out in his August column that he needs to round up 16 to 20 operators for his monthly operating session. He does not operate the railroad between these monthly sessions. Tony points out that his railroad will not come to life with any less of an effort.

I know several model railroaders, most of them well known and popular that see model railroading in the same way Tony does. However, most model railroaders can never realistically hope to build and operate a transportation system in their homes such as Tony's, Bill Darnaby's, and the well know large layouts of some others. I have no illusion of ever building and operating such a model railroad layout. Not only that, I do not want such a railroad.

What troubles me most in Tony's August dissertation is that he and others like him do not operate the railroad solo between operating sessions. He goes further alluding that everything must remain suspended in the place it was when the clock stopped at the end of the previous operating session. Things will resume where they left off when the next operating session is commenced.

That is so far away from what I want that it is somewhat difficult to explain. First of all, my layout, while large by some standards (12 x 44) is far smaller than what Tony is building. My railroad when operated to capacity calls for three 2-man train crews and one person to fill the role of dispatcher, station agent, etc. This is a total of 7 operators. However, I can operate the railroad between such operating sessions by myself or most often with one friend. We make a 2-man crew and run one of the local trains . . . with no concern of where the freight cars and locomotives are located when we are through. This is fun to me. It is play. It is not another job. I have two real jobs now – Engineering Manager at a large manufacturing company and professor of Engineering subjects at Purdue and a community college in the evenings. I do not need another job! I need rest, relaxation and some fun. This is what my layout is being built for – R&R and fun. Nothing more.

I cannot conceive of not being able to operate between operating sessions.

Jim Six

Millersburg IN

James Six

Millersburg IN

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I'm sort of in-between Tony and Jim

Mon, 2013-07-01 12:43 — joef



I'm sort of in-between Tony and Jim with my HO Siskiyou Line.

I sometimes run trains between sessions, and when I do, I track down the car cards and make sure they go with the train so the next op session is easier to set up. That said, at times I don't do this, so during op session prep, I will track down the car cards and get them back with the train.

I also tend to run op sessions such that where things stopped last session is where things start next session - it makes for a more realistic startup, I think - because some things are in mid-flight, just like they should be. It also leads to some interesting gymnastics on the part of dispatcher and crew to solve issues that were developing as the prior session ended.

That all said, I am not above restaging some trains to make things more interesting for the next session. In other words, if the Coos Bay Hauler west in staging - which becomes the Coos Bay Hauler east in staging - is light on cars, I will walk around the layout and "space-time-warp" some cars big hand style onto the Hauler east so there's more to do. I adjust the car card waybills to match.

I think this is all part of working to balance the railroad as it evolves.

But I have to agree not being able to run trains between op sessions seems a bit extreme. Have you made the hobby ops side so complex you've forgotten how to just have fun railfanning things? How do you test the railroad between sessions to tune it and improve the performance? Just having a live session be the only train running you do sounds like a recipe for some pretty poor op sessions to me.

Joe Fugate

Publisher, Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine



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Operating Between Operating Sessions

Mon, 2013-07-01 12:50 — AlanR



Jim,

Funny you should comment on Tony's column today. I just read it myself last night and thought "Wow! That seems a little extreme to NEVER run anything between sessions!" That would just take the fun out of it for me as well. While my layout is more in the infancy stages of design, I can't imagine letting the layout stagnate for a month waiting for the time machine to unfreeze before trains can move again. I understand Tony's point of view, though, with his desire to model a "transportation system" and thus keep a continuous flow from one session to the next. It seems that it would allow him to "stop the clock" at anytime and pick up where everything was left at the next session. This just isn't necessarily for me on my layout.

Your "one town" concept is very intriguing. With limited time and resources, this seems to be a very viable way to go and has altered my thinking on layout design. I don't want to build a layout that I have to muster a large crew for - although I did at one time - and the prototype I've chosen (Raritan River Rail Road - yes, the space is correct) does not lend itself to more than a couple of operators. With the "one town" concept, I can visualize heading to the train room, running the local into town, completing the work and leaving...and if that is all the time I have that day, so be it! If I can only get half the "work" done in my available time, then I can leave it where it is and pick it up the next time, or re-stage and do something different. I think the beauty of the "one town" concept is that at any given point in time a train may be there, or not - more often "not" nowadays!

Thanks for your thoughts!

Alan Rice

Amherst Belt Lines / Amherst Railway Society, Inc.

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Not for me

Tue, 2013-07-02 09:15 — IAISfan

I haven't read the column yet, but while I respect Tony doing what he enjoys most, it's not for me. I, too, look at what I'm doing as modeling a part of a "transportation system" - albeit a much smaller part - but I look at the time between sessions as just another step in that movement of freight, but with me operating alone. I pick a job up where the last session left off and continue working, then maybe slide over and work the other job for a while. Like Jim and Alan, for formal operating sessions, I only have a small number of crews per session - one yard job, and one road/local. Each session represents about 10 hours in my prototype's day, so I often generate the paperwork for a full day, host a session to represent the morning shift, and then operate the evening shift by myself over the next few weeks (or vice-versa).

From past exchanges on the Proto-Layouts list, I get the impression that Tony's also very much "hands off" during his own op sessions, preferring to assign all jobs to his visitors so he can stay freed up to answer questions, make repairs, etc. I did this on my own layout for the first 15+ sessions, but soon realized that I was missing out on the fun. I built this layout primarily for myself, to recreate memories of railfanning my prototype, and it just wasn't the same if I just stood back and watched its operation when friends are over. The interaction with them as we go about planning and performing the work is a big part of the fun for me.

Joe Atkinson

Modeling Iowa Interstate's West End, May 2005

<http://www.iaisrailfans.org/gallery/Sub4WestEnd>

<http://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/blog/joe-atkinson>

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The goal for me is to also be a part of the crew

Tue, 2013-07-02 12:34 — joef

A goal for me is to also be a part of the crew where possible. This means the layout needs to run well enough the owner isn't constantly fighting fires.

The larger and more complex the layout, the harder this is to do. That's one thing in favor of smaller layouts.

Joe Fugate

Publisher, Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine



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Gone!

Wed, 2013-07-03 05:48 — Jim Six

Here is the elevator after installation on the layout and some scenery installed around it. It was removed from the layout Saturday as was the bump-out that it rested on. I am following Tom Johnson's lead in simplifying the layout. The building was modified and reinstalled in a nearby, new location in the far side of the tracks and in a new siding.



Here is a seldom shared view of the elevator before it was originally installed on the layout. This is the track side view. Since the elevator was installed on the aisle side of the track, this view was not seen by operators.



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Reinstalled

Wed, 2013-07-03 06:26 — Jim Six

Here is the elevator reinstalled in its new location with a new siding for it. The grain bin has been removed. Too new for 1943. A new annex is installed in its place.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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No operation between sessions

Thu, 2013-07-04 23:38 — Virginian and L...



When I read Tony's article I came to the same conclusion that you did. Not for me. I like the idea of hosting operating sessions in the future, layout is not yet built, prohibiting myself from running trains on my layout seems beyond absurd. The idea of spending all that time and effort to build something and then be unable to use it other than once a month and then only by watching others seems like a complete waste of time and energy.

I am refining the one town concept for my particular time and place so that it will accommodate both types of train running. Scheduled trains or extras that just pass through town from staggling to staggling and stopping to change crews and locomotives, Trains that pass through but have cars to drop or pick up or both before leaving town. Locals that work between the next major town or junction and locals that never leave town.

With that being said sometimes I just like to run a train to watch it run over the layout, I do this on the club layout as well and find it very relaxing. This is a hobby and something that is done for enjoyment. I am also not interested in turning it into a job.

Now with that being said if someone was part of a fairly large group that operated on each others layouts all the time the running trains aspect might be happening when one is operating on someone else's layout and that would account for the sessions on other layouts precluding operating your own railroad in between sessions. There is no way that could happen where I am.

Rob

Almost forgot to mention that is a nice looking model and that your new addition looks like it was part of the original. Nice job on tying it together with the weathering, it is a shame to loose the view of the other side as that was also very well done.

Rob in Texas

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Modeling Sturgis MI in HO-scale NYC/PRR

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — Jim Six

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Sturgis MI 1943

This blog is for people who wish to see progress. Participants are free to make comments and suggestions and to ask questions. We will begin with my layout diagram. We will focus on Jim Six's layout past, present and projected future.



- [Jim Six's blog](#)
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Comments

It should be noted...



Fri, 2013-07-05 00:09 — kleavejr

...though he vigorously advocates his point of view, I believe Tony would be the first to say if one wants to be different, go ahead and be different. If you are not as interested in modeling a "transportation system" go ahead and don't.

One other thing to consider is, a modeler might be so busy with other responsibilities and obligations, they do not have time to operate in between the regular operating sessions, so it's not an issue not being able to operate trains in between sessions.

Ken L

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Been gone a while

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:09 — Jim Six

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I have been gone from posting for a few months now. Rather than spend my time posting and messaging I have been working on the layout (with the help of my close friends). I also was recruited away from my job and landed in a more responsible position that is eating my time. Not a lot of time to model when working 70+ hours every week. But nevertheless, lots of progress has been made to the layout this summer.

The change from the Michigan Division setting in northern Indiana to modeling just Sturgis MI has proven to be more work than anticipated. However, all track changes are completed and a lot of structures and scenery was ripped out. New structures are in progress as in scenery and new photo backdrops. The layout has been out of service since March. IT should be returned to service sometime in October this coming fall.

This is the area of the layout where the Leesburg Sand and Gravel company used to be located. There were large piles of gravel and various structures including a somewhat large gravel tippie. Now, the area is home to a small steam locomotive facility used to water, coal, and turn steam locos. In the subsequent photos you will see how the transition was performed and this coal tippie gain detail. Much scenery remains to be installed and the structures painted and weathered, . . . and more detail installed.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Here's another view of the

Sun, 2013-08-18 07:24 — Jim Six

Here's another view of the loco facility. You can see in the background where the gravel piles were removed and a turntable is installed. At the time, I was experimenting with different structures, The brick building was intended as a yard office, but I didn't like it there. The track into the coal dump shed is laid on sections of ceiling tile is glued in place and contoured into shape. The trees are a mix of photo backdrop and Scenic Express super trees.

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James Six

Millersburg IN

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This view shows the entire

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:11 — Jim Six

This view shows the entire corner. All of the track was removed from the area, The mainline was re-routed into the wall at the left. Two interchange tracks are not installed which cross the drop bridge to the PRR side of Sturgis. The turntable is installed. A wooden water is being tested for location and suitability. A couple of other small structures are in the scene but

soon to be removed. The backdrop needs to be repainted in the messed-up areas. And, new photo backdrop has to be printed and installed.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Here is a slightly different

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:13 — Jim Six

Here is a slightly different view of the northwest corner of Sturgis as work progresses. I at first thought this would be the arrangement of the structures but decided it was too crowded and model railroad-like. So, more changes were in store.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Progress is being made.

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:14 — Jim Six

Progress is being made. The backdrop has new sky blue paint and photo backdrop sections are installed -- the trees in the background. Note the electric utility poles. There are three transformers because the coal loader needs three-phase 440 volt AC. Back in 1943 the voltage was 440 and not today's 480 volts! More detail has been added to the coaling tower. The wooden water tower is starting to really look out of place in the scene.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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If I may be so bold...

Sun, 2013-08-18 07:51 — AlanR

Jim, if I may be so bold as to offer a suggestion, this scene almost cries out for a water column in place of the tower. Just a thought...

Alan Rice

Amherst Belt Lines / Amherst Railway Society, Inc.

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Purpose of turntable

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:14 — Jim Six

This photo was taken before the photo backdrop was installed but you can get an idea of how the facility will be used. The roundhouse is long gone, though I will install some foundation remnants in the base scenery. The sole purpose of the turntable is to turn locomotives.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Reply to Alan

Sun, 2013-08-18 08:08 — Jim Six

Alan,

A water column is exactly what I finally settled on. Great minds think alike. Stay tuned for the next few photos.

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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A different view

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:15 — Jim Six

Here's a different view of the facility. Keep in mind that with both the NYC and PRR mainlines dead-ending into the wall there are no through trains on my layout. All trains are out-and-back local trains. Being 1943 with no diesels, all locomotives have to be turned, . . . or return tender-first. This will be a busy little facility.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — James Six [Layout design](#)
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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

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- [Modeling 1900-1940 \(Was Depression Era Modeling\)](#) >> [click to view](#)
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UPDATED TRACK PLAN - [Click on track plan to enlarge](#)



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Comments

repainted backdrop

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:04 — Jim Six

Here you see that the backdrop paint has been repainted and new photo backdrop is installed up to and just around the corner. Remaining is a note on the ceiling tiles calling out that this area was Leesburg Sand and Gravel. More to come.

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James Six

Millersburg IN

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More photo backdrop

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:04 — Jim Six

More photo backdrop is installed in this view.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Fascia and more backdrop

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:05 — Jim Six

I Photoshopped in the green fascia. It is close but not quite a match for the paint card for the from Menards. I have one more section of photo backdrop to create and install . . . where the main line runs into the wall. Also note the wide, sweeping curvature of the two interchange tracks. This is a 46-inch radius and the minimum radius on the layout except for an industrial spur into the new sand, gravel, and concrete plant at the opposite end of the NYC side of the layout.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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coming together

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:07 — Jim Six

The scene in the corner is beginning to come together now.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Steel water tower

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:07 — Jim Six

One of my layout builders and operators Andy Laurent suggested that I relocate the wooden water tower to elsewhere and use a steel tower here. He feels it is more suited to the concrete coaling tower. I agree. So the wooden water tower was removed and a steel one was positioned in its place. There will be a water Tichy water column at the track leading to the turntable and also nearby at the main track.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Purpose of this blog

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:08 — Jim Six

The purpose of this blog is not only to show you WHAT I am doing, but also to show HOW I go about making decisions and building my layout. I hope that you enjoy the blog and please feel free to make comments and ask questions. As the scenery, paint, and detail in this scene progresses I will post updates. This will be the first scene on the layout that will be pushed to completion.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Just an observation

Sun, 2013-08-18 08:45 — Jim Six

As I am sitting here at the dining room table posting to this blog I have been glancing to my tight looking out the sliding glass door at the sky and horizon. Looking at my photos then back to the real sky I have to say that I "nailed" the sky color with my very faded blue. The color formula was give to me by Quintin Schini and Tom Johnson, two of my model railroad friends here in northern Indiana. The color they provided to me is perfect.

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Very impressive Jim

Sun, 2013-08-18 09:30 — JerryC

I have to agree with incorporating the steel water tower. While I'm sure there were many exceptions, concrete coaling towers always seemed to be associated with water columns and steel tanks.

I appears you have deleted the additional turntable lead shown on your trackplan. Is this correct? If so, what made you change?

Enjoying the blog.

Jerry

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Thanks Jerry

Sun, 2013-08-18 09:39 — Jim Six

You are right. The track plan does not match reality on the layout. The track plan is nothing more than ideas drawn somewhat to scale. However, it is only an approximation of the layout. For example, the plan shows a lot of "straight" track throughout the layout. In reality the tracks slightly curve and twist. The second track to the turntable wouldn't fit on the layout. I tried, but my other tracks are farther back into the layout than my plan suggests.

For me, too many people spend too much time preparing track plans. For me, a trackplan is only an idea to build to, but if reality dictates change, I change. While I would have liked to have that 2nd track to the turntable I am quite happy with how it turned out.

Good eye Jerry,

Jim

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Another look at the Sturgis post card

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:08 — Jim Six

I was just studying the Sturgis post card you posted. One thing that jumps out at me is that nothing is crowded. In the foreground between the GR&I (left and the NYC Pumpkinvine is open space. To the left (east) of the GR&I is more open space along the GR&I. To the right (west) of the NYC Pumpkinvine are some structures. There is open space between them and the NYC siding for unloading much line a team track -- which in fact, I believe it is. The area between the railroads in the foreground is staging and unloading from the PRR siding. Even farther back into the scene there is an elevator and some other buildings, but none are crowded. There is plenty of open space.

My point is that this photo looks nothing like the typical model railroad! Or should I say, the typical model railroad looks nothing like this scene? We as model railroaders are of a mental mindset that we need to cram as much into a given space as is physically possible, hence mountains a few feet from a lake or ocean port (at the extreme). Even where that is not the case, there are too many structures way too close together with little or no open space between.

Below is a photo looking down 24 feet of layout. This area is being re-constructed with track and scenery changes. However, the structures are on position. Is there anything in this scene crowded. I think not. I am trying very hard to not crowd any scene on the layout. Success will at least in part be measured by the overall appearance. If it look like just another layout, I will probably tear it down and find another hobby. Joanne and I can certainly use the room as storage space.



Tom,

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — James Six [Layout design](#)
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UPDATED TRACK PLAN - [Click on track plan to enlarge](#)



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Comments

Looking great!!!!

Sun, 2013-08-18 19:18 — TomJohnson

Jim. The recent additions look fantastic! I really like your engine service facility. I don't know a whole lot about the steam era but your scene does look "just right" to me and I think that is a good thing again for someone who doesn't know a lot about steam facilities. Also, the addition of the steel water column was a great move. The wooden tank just didn't look right to me, again for these eyes that doesn't know much about the steam era.

I also really like your track plan and agree with you 100% about NOT cramming in too much. You've got to have some open areas and that is what you taught me a while back thus prompting me to take things out on my layout and adding more "open" areas either in modeling or photo backdrops. I'm talking about taking out a ton of trees and replacing them with corn fields or open grass land. Again, I did this through actual 3-D modeling or photo backdrops.

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I also agree with Jim on drawing track plans. Sometimes, you just have to make changes so things flow better. Folks get too wrapped up with prototype track plans and never get anything done. I've had visitors ask me why I didn't put more track in here or there. What??? Why??? So I can have more industry to spot cars? More operation? No way! My railroad represents a real line that meandered its way from Logansport, Indiana to South Bend, Indiana. All of the farm towns it served had one or two grain elevators, maybe a place for fertilizer and that's about it. These towns were tiny. The track diagram was mostly made up of a main and one double ended siding to the grain elevator and fertilizer facilities. In some cases, there was a second track leading to another elevator and that's it. The track was straight and the sidings paralleled the main. There was none of this track going off into all directions. So, I think Jim has this part right.

I read with interest a few posts back on Tony Koester's "Train of Thought" in MR. If that is what he likes, then more power to him and I'm happy for him. I'm glad I don't operate that way. I'm a lone wolf operator and love it. I built my railroad for me and not for anyone else. I'm glad that I can operate every day just like the real short line railroads did. I enjoy the laid back easy going operation of a short line. Quintin Schini and I rail fanned the Chesapeake and Indiana last Friday. Wow, what a short line railroad! It is very small and serves basically two grain elevators. They own 9 locomotives with a couple of more former CN GP9's coming. They have SD9's, SD18's, one SD40-2, GP20, and rebuilt GP9's. All in the former railroads paint with patch outs. None of them are the same. They had their power parked everywhere too. Even on the main in two locations. Wow!!! I guess you can tell what I like. LOL!!!!

Jim, I'm looking forward to many more photos of your progress. Hopefully, I can make it to your next work session in September. :O)

Tom

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[How about both!](#)

- [Berlin 1929 - Gas Works Track Plan.](#)
- [On30 Change?](#)

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Glad you had some time to update us



Sun, 2013-08-18 21:50 — Virginian and L...

I always enjoy your posts and the work on your layout. I find busier main lines and larger terminals more appealing this layout just looks so realistic. It looks like it would be a blast to operate on, or to sit back and just watch the trains roll by when someone else is operating or when they are just getting some exercise. The uncramed scenes are great.

Thanks for keeping us around

Rob

Rob in Texas

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<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDmC2GjPPfARE7xdZPSjGaw/videos>

<http://www.etmrc.org/>

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Some prefer to model the scene ...



Sun, 2013-08-18 22:17 — Dave O

... others prefer to model the 'system'. Obviously if your aim is to capture the scene; then the 'crowdedness' will depend upon the scene being modeled. If you are aiming to capture the operations of the transportation system; then crowding industries together (and reducing them to their essential elements via selective compression) may provide a better representation of the 'system' in a given space. Each modeler must determine the proper balance of scenery/operations to best achieve their own goals in the hobby.

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Nice!



Sun, 2013-08-18 23:16 — MikeC in Qld

Love this scene



I thought it was worth seeing again.

Mike

My Blog: <http://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/node/14628>

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Reply to Dave O

Mon, 2013-08-19 04:24 — Jim Six

Many years ago when I was young and not really in touch with the realities of life I wanted to model a transportation system. Today, I have no desire to do that. My interest lies in operating a few local trains while capturing scenes in such a way that my layout will appear realistic. Operation consists of mimicking the thoughts, motions, and jobs that a train crew on a local freight had to perform back in 1943.

Unlike my friend Tony Koester, I do not have an army of workers, operators, or the resources to build such a layout. I used to envy that, but not for a long time now. While tony and I are good friends, we have different takes on our hobby. One of my fundamental goals is that when I aim a camera at the layout I get in return photos that look like the real thing rather than a model railroad.

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Reply to Mike C

Mon, 2013-08-19 04:26 — Jim Six

I am glad you like it, but there is a lot of work -- primarily scenery -- that needs to be completed.

Thanks again Mike,

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Here is another industry I am

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:03 — Jim Six

Here is another industry I am piecing together. It will be a sand, gravel, and concrete company. The two tracks into the tipples go through the wall to staging for this facility.





James Six

Millersburg IN

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Another Industry

Mon, 2013-08-19 14:05 — TomJohnson

The new scene looks excellent, Jim. For those of you who don't know, the structure to the left came from Jim's gravel complex on his former NYC Michigan. The one to the right came from his cement plant on the former NYC Michigan.

What Jim did was change the scenes in these two areas of his layout and combined them into this one larger complex on his Sturgis layout. I haven't seen any of this yet in person. I haven't been up to Jim's house in several months. Personally, I like this combined scene much better. Yes, it's OK to change things up a bit through mid construction.

Tom

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What IF....

Mon, 2013-08-19 14:54 — kleaverjr

...one models BOTH the scene AND a transportation system? That is what I will be attempting BOTH with the Interim P&A and the Ultimate P&A railroad layout.

I love the spaciousness of the two towns Jim is developing here. But I also love the transportation system type of modeling Tony K. is doing, so why can't a model railroad have both?! Granted, to do it successfully will require a TON of space, but that is why the Ultimate P&A is planned to be the size it is. When I mention the overall length, people think it will be impossible to build, but if it is spread out as Jim (and Lance Mindheim) advocate, it should be feasible. I don't see why it has to be one or the other. If one has to make a choice, then what am I miscalculating?

Ken L.



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pocket depth



Mon, 2013-08-19 16:16 — Bill Brillinger

If your pockets are deep enough, you *can* do both 😊

- Bill

Modeling the BNML in HO Scale, Admin for the RailPro User Group, & owner of Precision Design Co.



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Comments

Reply to Ken L

Mon, 2013-08-19 17:05 — Jim Six

It can't be both for me Ken . . . and for most mortal souls. A large layout cannot be detailed to the level people such as Tom Johnson and myself want simply due to what I see is a fact that nobody will live long enough to accomplish. I do not believe people who have not detailed to the level we seek are "qualified" to make such a determination! LOL

IMO anyone seeking both will have to make compromises in either detail level, size of layout, or both. Tony and a few others who have large layouts have not detailed to the level I seek. Great layout for sure. Large layout for certain. Just not as detailed as I want for myself.

Good luck! 😊

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Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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sorry....here are the piccies

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Reply to Bill Brillinger

Mon, 2013-08-19 17:11 — Jim Six

Amen Bill. Again IMO, too many model railroaders spend themselves into tough situations, such as divorce. I have more interests in life than model trains -- my wife and family, travel, work (yes, work), bicycling, and my friends. I cannot afford the time or the money that a larger layout requires.

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Reply to Ken and Jim.

Mon, 2013-08-19 17:39 — TomJohnson

For me, it's VERY simple. I wanted my railroad technically finished in a couple of years and before retirement. I got the basic parts of my railroad done in about two years! Oh sure, I'm always tweaking it here and there making changes but that is the fun part once the railroad is done. The railroad is done so I simply have fun operating or making some of these changes that really don't take up a lot of time. I have nothing against larger layouts and as many of us say, it's your railroad and you should simply model what you like. Right? The problem I have personally with large model railroads is they sometimes take well over 10 years to complete. Some never see finished scenery. I'm 61 and don't care for building a railroad into my 70's. If you're a youngster (let's say in your 20's), well then maybe you'll be able to finish a huge railroad by the time you reach your 30's and perhaps enjoy it into retirement. I just can't comprehend building something for 10 years or more and then trying to maintain it after that.

Tom

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through the wall

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:01 — Jim Six

Someone asked about the tracks on the other side of the wall. Here is what's there.

James Six

Millersburg IN



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another view of the plant

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:02 — Jim Six

Here is one more view of the sand, gravel, and concrete plant.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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Cool Jim!

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:09 — TomJohnson

Another great photo of your sand, gravel, and concrete plant. I like how your track in the first photo goes through the wall and into your water heater area for hidden staging. Great idea!

Tom

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corrected photo sizes

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:17 — Jim Six

i just corrected the size of the photos on pages 14 through 17. Now you can see the entire photos. Sorry. I forgot how to upload photos over the two months I was away!

Jim Six 🙄

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Here's a look-down view of

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:45 — Jim Six

Here's a look-down view of the sand, gravel, and concrete plant. You can get a good idea of its layout here. 90% of this facility was kitbashed from Walthers structures.



James Six

Millersburg IN

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will be scarce until December.

Mon, 2013-08-19 18:52 — Jim Six

School starts tomorrow evening. Between my 7am to 5pm regular 5-day job and 6pm to 10pm 4-day teaching job I will be scarce until December when the school semester ends. I will do some layout work weekends and share when I can.

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Nice view!

Mon, 2013-08-19 19:59 — TomJohnson

Jim. Your look down view really helps in seeing what this area looks like. Thanks for sharing. Tom

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Modeling Sturgis MI in HO-scale NYC/PRR

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — Jim Six

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Sturgis MI 1943

This blog is for people who wish to see progress. Participants are free to make comments and suggestions and to ask questions. We will begin with my layout diagram. We will focus on Jim Six's layout past, present and projected future.



- [Jim Six's blog](#)
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Comments

Reply to Ken

Tue, 2013-08-20 01:44 — joef

Ken:

Talk to anyone with a larger layout and they will tell you compromise is part of the deal. I can not detail my scenes to the level I'd love to do if I was building a smaller layout.

So I compromise. Just not enough hours in the day and still have a life.

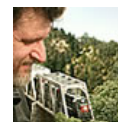
Besides, if you're in the camp like me where everything you do is to operate realistically, then quality of run matters more than uber-detailed modeling.

And quality of run most importantly depends on what you can see at a glance in the overall scene from 3 feet away, NOT what shows up in model railfan photos from track level a few inches away.

If you want it all, then you'd better get started young and build, build, build - and put a lot of other things out of your life - because that's what it's going to take.

Joe Fugate

Publisher, Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine



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comments about detail level



Tue, 2013-08-20 21:13 — Virginian and L...

I find the detail level comments interesting in a couple of ways. Jim is building a layout and not detailing his cars to the level he used to in the name of time and money. He has kept his layout "small" although it is actually rather large to save time and resources. In many ways he has simplified track work so he can model just a few scenes in a more realistic manner. It seems the big resource he is trying to save is time as he wants a "finished" railroad quickly, I believe 2 years.

Some other folks are all about the operation stand point and are willing to sacrifice everything else to have that as their goal. They choose the system of transportation and have a railroad that requires a bunch of people to build and maintain.

Some others want to have both. The big thing here seems to be money and time with the big thing listed being time.

I would like to present a take-away from the great ideas of both of the first two ideas that lends itself to the third. Jim's one town or two town model could easily be adapted to the system approach. One would simply choose one or two locations to model and let them spread out to the point that not a lot of selective compression is needed. For example if one is building a model of a section of railroad that is prototypically 7 miles long and compresses it to about 120 to 160 linear feet one would have room for quite a lot of detail with out making things a caricature of the real thing. All other parts of the system could be represented by staging and the modeled portion be the stage that the trains run through. Time might jump from 2 years to 10 years to get all the scenery completed but if one likes to build as well as operate one is looking at 10 years of enjoyment after the track hits the homasoat. By increasing the time aspect one tends to keep the money spent balanced over the life of the project.

It just seems to me that depending on the goals of the folks involved if a bit more time is allocated one could accomplish both objectives and have a fantastic layout as well. I think there are some very valuable tips or lessons that can be taken from both camps. The one thing that is important to me is running trains at least 40 to 50 cars long. The 12 car trains I see look like they should be doing laps around a Christmas tree to me as the real trains I remember in my location that I have chosen to model were much longer. I see no value in running trains so short that a truck would be a more economical choice to move the goods. Those are just my preferences in the hobby and yours maybe different that does not make mine right and yours wrong.

In one of his books John Armstrong made a statement that I will paraphrase as I don't remember the quote exactly. He stated that he liked the idea of designing a layout in a phased approach so one could begin and in not to much time begin operating the railroad and continuing to build as time and resources allowed. If one were to then be having so much fun that the next phase gets put off for an extended amount of time you have really accomplished the main goal of the hobby which is to have fun.

As far as time eliminating the highly detailed scenes from a layout I will use the layout of the FSM kit maker as an example. His layout seems to be more highly detailed than anyones and was built very fast. He has some unusual methods for building structures by comparison to the rest of us but one can not argue with his results. With this as an example one can see that it is possible to have it all depending on the choices one makes.

It seems to me that the posts and the responses have put a fantastic amount of knowledge and useful tips and techniques into a short amount of space. I don't think one could get this much great info and idea philosophy from 10 years worth of reading the hobby press and I extend a big thank you to everyone as I have really enjoyed the posts and discussions.

Rob

Rob in Texas

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Having both?

Tue, 2013-08-20 21:42 — dkaustin

It seems every time I build a layout a move is on my future. This time we are just moving across the river. However my current layout build doesn't fit the new room. So, I have to build something else to fit the new space. This has always been an issue. Start a layout...move!

Den



Dennis Austin located in NW Louisiana

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What has happened to Jim?

Sat, 2013-08-31 17:21 — Jim Six

A close friend told me this morning that whenever he runs into someone who knows he and I are good friends they ask what has happened to me. How could I have been one of the early prototype modelers, written hundreds of articles about prototype modeling, they all of a sudden have abandoned prototype modeling. They saw the change from ultra detailed and kitbashed diesels to less detailed diesels, and now to steam without diesels. They have seen me go from accurate prototype modeling of the NYC Michigan Division to a rendition of Sturgis MI where the track arrangement only vaguely resembles what track was in Sturgis back in 1943.

What has happened to be to have made such radical changes while retreating from prototype modeling?

I will say this. Having removed the handcuffs of prototype modeling I have gone from frustration to having a lot of fun. I have never enjoyed the hobby so much. Have you read Tony Koester's *Trains of Thought* column in the most recent Model Railroader? Tony has been questioning what he has gotten himself into for some time now among his friends. We have had many conversations about this topic.

I believe that prototype modeling is better left to model builders -- like I was for nearly twenty-five years before starting my present layout. It was somewhat easy to accurately locomotives and freight cars when there was no layout to build. Now that I have a layout under construction absolutely without any doubt whatsoever have time to build locomotives and rolling stock to the level of accuracy and detail I used to. I am mortal. As a mortal person I cannot do both.

I made a choice to loosen up my prototype modeling to a level of modeling that "represents" the prototype. I make no claim to any strict prototype adherence. However, I am modeling a specific prototype -- my way. I only need please myself. This is model railroading my way.

Free from the shackles of of strict prototype modeling.

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Amen!

Sat, 2013-08-31 18:01 — INRAIL

AMEN! :O) There is nothing more I can add to your comments.

TJ

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What happened?

Sat, 2013-08-31 18:54 — Dave O



I have gone from frustration to having a lot of fun.

Good on ya! That is what a hobby should be. And as we mature our interests sometimes change and adjustments must be made. You are a wonderful modeler and I enjoy seeing your work. I am happy for you. Thank you for sharing, and keep the updates coming. Cheers. Dave O

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What happened

Sat, 2013-08-31 20:04 — Don Hanley

Jim

Great revelation. It takes a lot of courage to realize that the track you have spent a lot of time and effort going down wasn't working. Most would keep on going down the same track, not willing to make the change. Way to go! It sounds like you have found the sweet spot for you in the hobby.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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"As a mortal person I cannot do both"

Sat, 2013-08-31 20:22 — ctxmf74

Pick the right prototype to model and it's no harder than building a freelance railroad. A room or a roster can have the same number of pieces and same amount of work spread out in different ways. Some might feel free'd by not having to follow prototype practices but others modeling a prototype might feel free'd by avoiding the stress of deciding what their layout should look like? I look at prototype versus non prototype modeling the same as I look at modeling in N scale versus modeling in HO or O scales. The little parts can be doors on N scale cars or door latches on HO cars or rivets on O scale cars, but in the end the same number of things get installed..DaveBranum



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That's great Jim!

Sun, 2013-09-01 05:30 — IAISfan



Jim, I think it's great that you've found the path that's right for you. For you and Tom, strict prototype modeling obviously felt too restrictive, so I'm glad you're now doing what you enjoy more.

I'm with Dave, though, in the feeling that, for some of us, freelancing or proto-freelancing was the more restrictive choice. Personally, I didn't care for the additional decisions it forced on me, or the lack of a clear, cohesive "target" to aim for in my modeling. Strict prototype modeling was the freeing answer for me. Strangely enough, it was the members of your old Yahoo layout group who introduced me to strict prototype modeling.

The variety in approaches is part of what makes this hobby so interesting. As Don said, it's fun to see everyone find their own personal "sweet spot".

Joe Atkinson

Modeling Iowa Interstate's West End, May 2005

<http://www.iaisrailfans.org/gallery/Sub4WestEnd>

<http://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/blog/joe-atkinson>

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Is it prototype modeling?

Sun, 2013-09-01 05:57 — Jim Six

After reading the kind messages above, I decided more explanation is needed. In years past I was somewhat of a strict prototype modeler -- particularly with the detail applied to my models. As I have well documented, building a layout forced me to relax my detail standard if there is to be any hope of completing the layout. Once the layout is complete I may revisit some freight cars and add detail, . . . maybe.

My comments about removing the handcuffs of strict prototype modeling does not mean I have become a freelancer of a proto-freelancer. I am not fabricating any railroads that never existed. While I am glad for my friends who have done so because they are happy and having fun. Tom Johnson is one in particular. I fully support what he has done and is doing.

However, I cannot bring myself to inventing railroads or creating branch lines or mainlines that never existed. I am modeling both the NYC and the PRR in Sturgis MI set in 1943. If you knew more you would say that this makes me a prototype modeler.

What has changed is the strictness to the prototype that I hold myself to. I started my layout more than six years ago. As time has passed I grew frustrated with my effort to follow the prototype, so I loosened up the strictness of how I modeled the prototype. In other words, I made more compromises. As time passed I loosened up more and began making more compromises. I continued this spiraling away from strict adherence to the prototype until I reached the point where I find myself today. That is, the frustrations are minimal and I am finally truly having fun.

The above said, I am remain a prototype modeler. After all, I am modeling the operation of two prototype railroads in an actual town with actual rail lines that existed in 1943. If this is not prototype modeling, I do not know what is. On the other hand, I cannot match all of the actual buildings, bridges, exact track arrangement, the actual locomotives and cabooses right down to the number of their sides. That is beyond my capability to do and still have fun.

Have you read Tony Koester's latest Trains of Thought column. Tony has fallen on the sword of prototype modeling along with the grandness of his dreams. While he did not say is has been a flaming idiot -- which he certainly is not -- Tony has fallen on the sword of prototype modeling and the grandness of his ambition. He has publicly admitted that he bit of more than he can chew. My transition away for strict prototype adherence and telling about it here and elsewhere is my admission that I bit off more than I can chew.

Modeling Sturgis MI in 1943,

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Modeling Sturgis MI in HO-scale NYC/PRR

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — Jim Six

- [Layout design](#)

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Sturgis MI 1943

This blog is for people who wish to see progress. Participants are free to make comments and suggestions and to ask questions. We will begin with my layout diagram. We will focus on Jim Six's layout past, present and projected future.



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Comments

reply to Joe

Sun, 2013-09-01 05:59 — Jim Six

Joe,

I absolutely love what you have already accomplished with your IAIS layout. You have true talent and also clear vision that few of us have. Please continue sharing as it is both a lesson and inspiration for us all.

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Selective Compression = Selective Elimination

Sun, 2013-09-01 06:28 — Jim Six

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While modeling Sturgis I have been researching what was there in 1943. No simple task I might add! The farther back in time one models the more difficult it is to gather prototype information to accurately model it. I have satellite views along with an old (1945) map showing the entire town including the RR tracks that were there. This is a great help. However, I have struggled to find photos of the structures that lined the railroads.

So, should I stop building the layout and devote my time to research until I gather all of the information necessary to model the area accurately. I don't think so. That would put the handcuffs back on me that I told you I had removed.

Friend and research fanatic Mark Plank has produced a lot of information I need -- including a few photos. This includes lists of customers served by both the NYC and the PRR back in the mid-1940s. This is close enough to 1943 for me. This will allow me to use the actual names of the customers. Ain't this great prototype modeling?!

The information Mark has provides also makes it clear that I do not have enough layout to include all of the rail-served customers. This means either give up or make more compromises. I am not about to give up. I have chosen to selectively eliminate some of these customers from what I will actually model. To me, this is a form of selective compression. I am building my layout with things spread out and not crammed into my given space. Crowding would mean inclusion of more rail customers, but it would also make the layout less realistic -- something of great value to me.

The trick here is to pick and choose which rail customers I will actually model. Available photos is aiding in this. The type of customers that will match available structures that I can kitbash is also playing a key role in my decision making. I am greatly aided in the fact that nobody that will ever visit my layout or see my photos of it will know what was there in 1943 let alone what the structures looked like!

I share my thought processes with you in hope that you can learn from what I have done, am doing, and from my mistakes and successes. Learn from the mistakes of others because you will not live long enough to make them all yourself!

Modeling Sturgis MI in 1943

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Following an older prototype

Sun, 2013-09-01 09:38 — CM Auditor

I belong to a fairly large group of fan of the Colorado Midland Rwy lasting from 1886 to 1922. Seems most of the group have fallen into two groups, one modeling 1895 and the other somewhere from 1905 to 1908. Since the majority of the records of the Midland were burned in a fire in 1954, we as a group are attempting to use all known resources available to develop as much information as possible. When we kind of think we know what a building looked like in our era, we build as a model. In our case, we are hoping that someone will see our version and tell that isn't what it looked like and then provide us with a photo or two. We then immediately build the proper version of the facility. Needless to say, that doesn't happen very often, but we sure love it when it does.

This is one way to model older railways and it is more of an attitude than a slavish practice.

CM Auditor

Tom VanWormer

Monument CO

Colorado City Yard Limits 1895

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Thank you Jim

Sun, 2013-09-01 12:16 — IAISfan

Thanks very much for the kind words Jim. To be clear, in my last reply, I didn't mean to imply that what you're doing is freelancing or proto-freelancing. Nothing wrong with either, but I should have included "less-strict prototype modeling" in my reply as well. However, the point is that no matter where you fall on that continuum, I'm happy for you if it makes the hobby enjoyable.



Joe Atkinson

Modeling Iowa Interstate's West End, May 2005

<http://www.iaisrailfans.org/gallery/Sub4WestEnd>

<http://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/blog/joe-atkinson>

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Backing Up

Sun, 2013-09-01 13:32 — DANNY CAUSEY

Sometimes we need to back up to go forward

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"will see our version and tell that isn't what it looked like "

Sun, 2013-09-01 15:30 — ctxmf74

Then you gotta hope they are not too polite to not tell you what they see wrong?

I don't view changing direction as "biting off more than you can chew" but more as a changing of appetite due to more experience and a better understanding of the effort/reward equation? ..DaveBranum



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Great Comments!

Sun, 2013-09-01 15:03 — INRAIL

All of you folks made very good comments here in response to Jim's post last night. I'm very happy for Jim in his decision to move forward and not worry about the small details. Just move forward and finish the railroad. :O) Sure, Jim's track arrangement and structures may not look exactly like the track and structures in Sturgis but he's still modeling a prototype in the NYC and PRR. He's not freelancing his power like I am.

I think Jim mentioned something about Proto Freelancers making up or inventing their own track routes and such. I personally don't like doing that either. I don't care for made up town names either but that's just me. I am a Proto Freelancer but I'm also following an actual abandoned prototype branch line. The only difference with me is I'm modeling my own short line power to serve this branch after Conrail abandoned the line in 1979. So, I'm modeling a prototype line like Jim but my power is freelanced and some of my structures are not exact matches. They are however close renditions of actual elevators in my area. When folks visit my layout from the area, they'll recognize many of the elevators and businesses for sure. I'm not sure what you'd call this. I guess Prototype Freelancer is still the best description here. Just some of my additional thoughts.

Tom

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"I'm not sure what you'd call this"

Sun, 2013-09-01 15:46 — ctxmf74

Hi Tom, I like to think of it as evocative modeling. Capturing the essence of the prototype by arranging the distinctive elements in the manner that best explains it to the viewer. Much like art a good expressionistic modeling job can be more moving than a brick by brick or rivet by rivet copy as the person looking at it gets to fill in the blanks from their own experiences and preferences..... DaveB



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Reply to Joe

Sun, 2013-09-01 15:47 — Jim Six

I didn't take your message wrong Joe. I knew what you meant. 😊 You are a gentleman and a great modeler. I am glad to be a friend. You're right. I am a prototype modeler -- a less strict prototype modeler.

Thanks again and keep sharing your railroad with us.

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Reply to ctxm74

Sun, 2013-09-01 15:54 — Jim Six

ctxm,

First of all, what is "wrong" is in the mind of each of us. No two of us are alike. I will wager that not a soul will ever visit my layout and know enough about Sturgis in 1943 to tell me that what I have is not a good enough match. They probably won't have big enough "balls" either. I am not a small guy. LOL 😊 Besides, I am not all that far off from what was there in 1943. The layout is a lot closer than one may think.

I never implied that changing direction is biting off more than one can chew. I only said that planning and trying to build more than one has time and resources to build is biting off more than one can chew. Many of us have done that -- including me. Many of us are doing that right now. I am not doing that this time. Had I to start over, my layout would probably be smaller.

There is more to life than model railroading!

Jim Six

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — James Six [Layout design](#)
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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

This blog is about my 1927 Sturgis Michigan based layout as it continues on toward completion - someday! Those following along are encouraged to make comment, suggestions, and to ask questions. The layout plan shown here has been updated to my current plan. This is your opportunity to become part of the process during development of the layout.

My other blogs will focus on what they are intended for.

- [Modeling 1900-1940 \(Was Depression Era Modeling\)](#) >> [click to view](#)
- [Modeling a 1-Town Layout](#) >> [click to view](#)

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I like your term DaveB.

Sun, 2013-09-01 16:15 — TomJohnson

Dave. Very good! That sort of fits me too as I'm an artist and retired art teacher. Evocative modeling? Expressionistic? Those are good ones! :O) I'm just trying to capture the "general look and feel" of northern Indiana and small farm towns without worrying about getting everything perfectly matched to the areas I'm modeling. If I like an elevator better in a nearby town that was not on my railroad, I'm going to model it and put it on my railroad because that's what makes me happy. Yes, allow visitors to "fill in the blanks from their own experiences and preferences" as you put it. Thanks Dave!

Tom

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Reply to Dave and Tom

Sun, 2013-09-01 16:21 — Jim Six

Dave,

I guess I didn't read your message correctly. Please forgive me. I agree with what Tom wrote in reply.

Jim

James Six

Millersburg IN

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I like the idea

Mon, 2013-09-02 07:50 — Virginian and L...



Building a representation of anything in the past except for a few exceptions will be difficult. Most of the data needed to do so is long gone. I am looking at it in terms of a sliding scale. Exact reproductions of track, structures, cars, and locomotives, and their movements on one side. Anything goes, it's my railroad and my rules on the other. Some places have a great deal of data available like the empire state building so doing a representation of it at nearly anytime would be possible, other locations like Wheeling, WV which I am planning have a lot of data missing and have changed a great deal. The river is still there but the tracks and the railroads that served the industries are gone as are the industries.

I am wanting to convey an impression of the area and going to model what might have been had some things gone differently. I will try to model many of the major industries and include the actual prototype roads that were in the area but will add my free lanced line.

That will give me the most enjoyment and since my free lanced line is a merger of two real railroads I will be able to pick from them and their neighbors with out straining plausibility too much. As time passed the two railroads I have as merger partners were actually merged into a larger railroad as was one of the two other railroads that served the area.

The key to me is doing what will bring the most enjoyment for the longest time and allow the most flexibility should interests change. For example by choosing a real place and free lancing should one later choose to model the three prototypes that ran over the actual lines in the area in a more faithful way the majority of the equipment could be reused to that effort on the existing layout.

Rob in Texas

Rob in Texas

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Reply to Rob in Texas

Mon, 2013-09-02 09:17 — Jim Six

Rob,

I believe you'd fit in with Tom and me rather well. Thanks for your insight.

Jim

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Thanx

Mon, 2013-09-02 11:40 — Virginian and L...

Thanks for the kind words, I sure do enjoy your layout and model building even though it is from a vicarious standpoint.

Rob in Texas

Rob in Texas

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Very nice

Tue, 2013-09-10 10:10 — viroque

Jim,

This is a great looking layout already. I'm glad you found what you enjoy.

A trip back in time is very cool, and I'll follow your blog to travel!

Thank you,

Vianney Roge

France

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I've just been skimming over

Tue, 2013-09-10 12:35 — WANDRR

I've just been skimming over most of the posts here from page one of your blog while I'm in a dry spell at work this afternoon, and was mainly focusing on photos and admiring the detail work and scratch-building (excellent BTW). Every now and then a 'headline' would catch my eye and I would stop to read what I was previously skimming. There seems to have been quite a bit of discussion about big layout versus level of detail and time spent building a layout versus modeling industry and landscapes. It makes for interesting reading but I can only hope that as I build in small portions to a semi-prototypical standard that my completed modules will look half as good as what I see being done by Jim Six and INRail. They seem to have been able to find that happy medium between large layout and 'Proto:XX' type of modeling; Operations and Railfanning. I can't decide if I'm a fan of railroading or fine scale modeling. Keep up the fine work and I'll keep returning to drool on my keyboard.

TJ R.

Mobile, AL (Originally from New Haven, IN)

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Great Pics

Tue, 2013-09-10 18:47 — Jeff Youst

Hi Jim. Just saw the photo from the "old" Marion Division of the New Paris Turn in September MRH. It's a great picture of a "Fallen Flag" in modeling! I'm telling you folks, having gotten to operate on the old layout and be party to work sessions



on the Sturgis layout, Jim will knock this out of the park in due time. Looking forward to operating the "finished" layout! Jeff Youst Erie Lackawanna Marion Div.

Jeff EL Marion 2nd (Chicago) Sub 1964

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Reply to Jeff Youst

Sun, 2013-09-15 16:25 — Jim Six

Yes, the former layout arrangement was fun to operate, but I was never satisfied. That said, I am really excited about the new Sturgis arrangement. I hope that the work session scheduled two weeks from now will place it back in service for the first time since last February. I am really looking forward to operating in Sturgis. I hope you will be there.

Jim

James Six

Millersburg IN

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regarding through the wall

Mon, 2013-09-16 20:30 — tnd134

Jim, the T&P valve sitting on your water heater. Is it an extra or throw away? I'm sure you know a water heater with no T&P valve or an inoperable T&P valve is a ticking time bomb. Your modeling as well as INRAIL's is about as close to real life as anything I've seen, just beautiful! Thanks for sharing and hosting this blog, I'm enjoying all the experience and responses.

Terry

Modeling the Espee in the mid 60's

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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — James Six [Layout design](#)
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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

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I like your term DaveB.

Sun, 2013-09-01 16:15 — TomJohnson

Dave. Very good! That sort of fits me too as I'm an artist and retired art teacher. Evocative modeling? Expressionistic? Those are good ones! :O) I'm just trying to capture the "general look and feel" of northern Indiana and small farm towns without worrying about getting everything perfectly matched to the areas I'm modeling. If I like an elevator better in a nearby town that was not on my railroad, I'm going to model it and put it on my railroad because that's what makes me happy. Yes, allow visitors to "fill in the blanks from their own experiences and preferences" as you put it. Thanks Dave!

Tom

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Reply to Dave and Tom

Sun, 2013-09-01 16:21 — Jim Six

Dave,

I guess I didn't read your message correctly. Please forgive me. I agree with what Tom wrote in reply.

Jim

James Six

Millersburg IN

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I like the idea

Mon, 2013-09-02 07:50 — Virginian and L...



Building a representation of anything in the past except for a few exceptions will be difficult. Most of the data needed to do so is long gone. I am looking at it in terms of a sliding scale. Exact reproductions of track, structures, cars, and locomotives, and their movements on one side. Anything goes, it's my railroad and my rules on the other. Some places have a great deal of data available like the empire state building so doing a representation of it at nearly anytime would be possible, other locations like Wheeling, WV which I am planning have a lot of data missing and have changed a great deal. The river is still there but the tracks and the railroads that served the industries are gone as are the industries.

I am wanting to convey an impression of the area and going to model what might have been had some things gone differently. I will try to model many of the major industries and include the actual prototype roads that were in the area but will add my free lanced line.

That will give me the most enjoyment and since my free lanced line is a merger of two real railroads I will be able to pick from them and their neighbors with out straining plausibility too much. As time passed the two railroads I have as merger partners were actually merged into a larger railroad as was one of the two other railroads that served the area.

The key to me is doing what will bring the most enjoyment for the longest time and allow the most flexibility should interests change. For example by choosing a real place and free lancing should one later choose to model the three prototypes that ran over the actual lines in the area in a more faithful way the majority of the equipment could be reused to that effort on the existing layout.

Rob in Texas

Rob in Texas

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Reply to Rob in Texas

Mon, 2013-09-02 09:17 — Jim Six

Rob,

I believe you'd fit in with Tom and me rather well. Thanks for your insight.

Jim

James Six

Millersburg IN

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Thanx

Mon, 2013-09-02 11:40 — Virginian and L...

Thanks for the kind words, I sure do enjoy your layout and model building even though it is from a vicarious standpoint.

Rob in Texas

Rob in Texas

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Very nice

Tue, 2013-09-10 10:10 — viroque

Jim,

This is a great looking layout already. I'm glad you found what you enjoy.

A trip back in time is very cool, and I'll follow your blog to travel!

Thank you,

Vianney Roge

France

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I've just been skimming over

Tue, 2013-09-10 12:35 — WANDRR

I've just been skimming over most of the posts here from page one of your blog while I'm in a dry spell at work this afternoon, and was mainly focusing on photos and admiring the detail work and scratch-building (excellent BTW). Every now and then a 'headline' would catch my eye and I would stop to read what I was previously skimming. There seems to have been quite a bit of discussion about big layout versus level of detail and time spent building a layout versus modeling industry and landscapes. It makes for interesting reading but I can only hope that as I build in small portions to a semi-prototypical standard that my completed modules will look half as good as what I see being done by Jim Six and INRail. They seem to have been able to find that happy medium between large layout and 'Proto:XX' type of modeling; Operations and Railfanning. I can't decide if I'm a fan of railroading or fine scale modeling. Keep up the fine work and I'll keep returning to drool on my keyboard.

TJ R.

Mobile, AL (Originally from New Haven, IN)

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Great Pics

Tue, 2013-09-10 18:47 — Jeff Youst

Hi Jim. Just saw the photo from the "old" Marion Division of the New Paris Turn in September MRH. It's a great picture of a "Fallen Flag" in modeling! I'm telling you folks, having gotten to operate on the old layout and be party to work sessions



on the Sturgis layout, Jim will knock this out of the park in due time. Looking forward to operating the "finished" layout! Jeff Youst Erie Lackawanna Marion Div.

Jeff EL Marion 2nd (Chicago) Sub 1964

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Reply to Jeff Youst

Sun, 2013-09-15 16:25 — Jim Six

Yes, the former layout arrangement was fun to operate, but I was never satisfied. That said, I am really excited about the new Sturgis arrangement. I hope that the work session scheduled two weeks from now will place it back in service for the first time since last February. I am really looking forward to operating in Sturgis. I hope you will be there.

Jim

James Six

Millersburg IN

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regarding through the wall

Mon, 2013-09-16 20:30 — tnd134

Jim, the T&P valve sitting on your water heater. Is it an extra or throw away? I'm sure you know a water heater with no T&P valve or an inoperable T&P valve is a ticking time bomb. Your modeling as well as INRAIL's is about as close to real life as anything I've seen, just beautiful! Thanks for sharing and hosting this blog, I'm enjoying all the experience and responses.

Terry

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Modeling Sturgis MI in HO-scale NYC/PRR

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — Jim Six

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Sturgis MI 1943

This blog is for people who wish to see progress. Participants are free to make comments and suggestions and to ask questions. We will begin with my layout diagram. We will focus on Jim Six's layout past, present and projected future.



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[I realize the restrictions of researching railroads of the past.](#)

Tue, 2013-09-17 13:25 — dkaustin

Jim,

I did some research on the Clairborne-Polk Military railroad located just south of Alexandria, Louisiana (long since abandoned). I posted a lot of information about the RR on a post here in the forum. It is a 50 mile single line that was built for training purposes. There was lots of information available including a count of the rolling stock by type, number of engines and type, as well as training videos from the time period. I found the Timetable too. I had diagrams of the yard at the Camp Claiborne end as well. The big hole in the research is with the Camp Polk end, now Fort Polk an active military base. I have not been able to find any diagrams or photos of the rail yard there.

I don't see a reason to continue planning it unless information finally turns up on the Camp Polk yard. It would sure make for a unique model railroad!

Den



Dennis Austin located in NW Louisiana

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NYC branch line ballast

Sun, 2013-09-29 02:47 — Macowiec

Jim, Can I ask you about the materials you used for track ballasting on your layouts? I'm working on a layout that will be an NYC/PC branch line in SE Michigan in the late 60s, after some years of deferred maintenance. This would have always been a secondary track, not a main line.

I assume that cinders would have been the main ballast used. Would this apply to the industry sidings, too, or would just dirt have been used here? Your track looks like exactly what I'd like to capture. If you could share a few words on your materials/technique, it would be most appreciated!

This is the look I'm trying to capture:

NYC "Old Road"



- comes to life
- Over weight rail car?
Is this guy wrong?
- Finishing works on scratch built wooden platform early 1900s
- A couple Central American Railroads
- A Visit to Neil Erickson's Umauma Railway!
- Traveling around the USA looking at 1:1 and looking at and running some 1:87.

[more](#)



On the ex-NYC Norwalk Branch:



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Jim are you doing ok

Wed, 2013-10-30 21:03 — Virginian and L...

I know you are busy with work, railroad and other stuff but just wondering if you are doing ok. Don't mean to be nosy just like to try and keep up with my internet folks and make sure they are doing ok.



Rob in Texas

Rob in Texas

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Jim is fine

Thu, 2013-10-31 18:57 — TomJohnson

Rob. Jim is fine. He's very busy with his job during the day and teaching classes at a local college in the evenings. He'll get back to some modeling this winter. Stay tuned!

Tom Johnson

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Macowiec

Thu, 2013-10-31 19:13 — TomJohnson

Hello. I don't think Jim would mind me answering this. A lot of the ballast on these secondary main lines and branch lines that are run down were usually made of of a gravel type material. The sidings were cinder and or cinder and dirt/gravel mix. The Nickel Plate Road secondary main through Plymouth, Indiana back in the late 50's and 60's were mostly gravel material like on county roads for the main and cinder in the sidings. Some spurs were simply in the dirt! Ties were covered. Sometimes, you could barely see the rails. I like Highball ballast for the gravel and cinders. I'm not sure what Jim used as a product line but he does have dirt, gravel, and cinder for ballast. He used static grass for the weeds around his sidings and spurs. When applied with a static grass applicator, the grass is pretty forgiving when the loco and rolling stock rolls over the weedy track. Don't get your weeds too thick or you'll have problems that will drive you nuts like broken air lines if you detail your rolling stock or purchase highly detailed rolling stock from folks like Tangent and Exactrail. The air hoses on those cars are pretty easy to break. I hope I helped some. Jim and I think the same when it comes to scenery. He'll be able to jump in one of these days and perhaps add to what I said.

Tom Johnson

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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

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You will find great information and discussion there. Check them out.

UPDATED TRACK PLAN - [Click on track plan to enlarge](#)



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Glad It's Back



Sun, 2018-02-11 18:37 — JC Shall

Hey Jim, I'm glad you revived this blog. I had created a bookmark to it way back when so I could study your concrete batch plant, and your small engine service facilities (both of which I'll need on my layout).

-Jack

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Glad It's Back

Mon, 2018-02-12 07:30 — James Six

Jack,

I was looking over that concrete batch plant myself. I still like it a lot, so much so that I still have it set aside. I am afraid though that it may be too new of a design to work for 1925-1935. I will need to do more research. It is too new, I may trade it to someone for something that I can use.



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Should I revive this blog for

Wed, 2018-02-14 09:35 — James Six

Should I revive this blog for updating folks about progress on my layout or should I let it die? I have a couple of blogs that I am currently maintaining, *One-Town Layouts* and *Modeling 1900-1940 (was Depression era modeling)*.

While both these blogs are rather popular and well visited with lots of participants, they were not created to be about MY layout, though I have been posting my updates there. This old blog was created to be about my layout.

So I ask one more time, should I keep this blog alive to post updates about my layout?

I thank all of you who have followed me over the years here on MRH and elsewhere. I very much appreciate your participation.



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Might be a Good Idea

Wed, 2018-02-14 10:01 — JC Shall

Jim, it might be a good idea to do that since your layout updates tend to get "swallowed" by the sheer volume of posts in the other threads. The good thing about that of course, is that those threads are generating a lot of discussion. Resurrecting this blog would help to focus on just *your* layout progress.

You might have to repeat some of your highlights from the other threads here though in order to get it up to date.

-Jack

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Let it Die, But Don't Kill It

Wed, 2018-02-14 10:05 — Photo Bud



I have found this very interesting and should be retained as much of the history is of interest to those of us who follow your other two. I would also suggest adding a link to this one in your other two blogs in their intros. Sort of like a "Link to the Past".

My two cents worth and worth every penny of it!

Bud (aka John), The Old Curmudgeon

Fan of Northern Pacific and the Rock Island

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Yes

Wed, 2018-02-14 10:58 — tom oconnell

Keep this going. Your thoughts you have shared have spurred a lot of interest in all you have started.

TomO

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I am working on reviving this

Wed, 2018-02-14 11:07 — James Six

I am working on reviving this blog. I need to make a few updates. I will also need to bring some of my layout posts from my other blogs over to this blog. This will keep all of my layout updates here and keep the other blogs focused on what they were created for.



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Great idea Jim, I like this

Wed, 2018-02-14 11:34 — Virginian and L...

Great idea Jim, I like this blog as well as the others and this is definitely an interesting discussion. The updates will show how things have evolved over time.



Rob in Texas

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Glad You are reviving This Blog

Wed, 2018-02-14 11:42 — kansaspacif1c

Jim:

Happy you are reviving this blog. I went back on Sunday and read everything from the beginning and found many useful ideas.

I enjoy all the blogs you currently have going. Its like having the people with whom you share common interests all together in the local hobby shop on a Saturday morning sharing ideas but through the magic of the internet we get to share "layout visits" as well.

Although my own small layout under development is a three town, not a one town, layout (Think of it as one town 3 times.), I hope to share some of what I'm doing there before long. Have to get some things ready first. I have been guilty of analysis paralysis and buying too much stuff I will sell now that I know I'm not going to use it.

Chuck

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Here is another grain

Fri, 2018-02-16 09:29 — James Six

Here is another grain elevator that I am working on. It started out on Tom Johnson's layout. Tom removed and retired it. I acquired the model and kitbashed it into this new configuration and changed the color from light yellow to white. The model is not complete yet. This dealer will have grain, feed, oil, and coal to sell.



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Comments

Building 4 ?

Fri, 2018-02-16 10:23 — JC Shall

Jim, is this building 4 on your track plan?

-Jack

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Building 4

Fri, 2018-02-16 17:46 — James Six

Yes it is Jack! You have a good eye my friend. There is another elevator across the track from this building. The main track runs between them. Competitors in such close proximity were somewhat common back in the era that I am modeling.



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Here is a near current view

Sat, 2018-02-17 08:39 — James Six

Here is a near current view of the layout as it is today. Much has been changed as I fine-tuned the arrangement of buildings and track. As you can see, the layout is still in the construction phase, but I am progressing more every week. Now that I am retired I work on it several days each week.



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As you can see in this

Sat, 2018-02-17 09:18 — James Six

As you can see in this photo I am making progress on this scene with the furniture factory. However, there is something very wrong with this scene as pictured here. The farmland backdrop just does not go with the factory. When I started the layout this area did not have the factory. The factory resulted from my evolving likes and dislikes. In the "beginning" there was going to be a grain elevator in this location and the farmland would have been perfect. However, over the years I decided that I wanted more switching and more variety of what to switch. I have not interest in a "city" setting, but a small town like Sturgis, Michigan really appeals to me. Hence the furniture factory.

So, where does this leave me. I'll tell you. It leaves me in need of a new photo backdrop for this particular location. Stay tuned.



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As you can see in this

Sat, 2018-02-17 10:50 — James Six

Well, I am at it again. I went to Google maps and located Sturgis MI. Next based on the Sanborn map I located the furniture factory and went to street view where my road into the backdrop would be - N Fourth St. I took a few screen captures from the street view and with Photoshop corrected the perspective, blanked out the sky, then adjusted the colors some. I also deleted two cars and a pickup truck along with a modern garbage can.

Note: The factory still stands to the left behind the camera that took this image. Modern tools like Google Maps, street view along with Sanborn Maps to locate where you want to capture the image are great tools!!!





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As you can see in this

Sat, 2018-02-17 10:55 — James Six

I'm not done testing yet. Using Photoshop I next overlaid the backdrop photo onto my earlier photo of the actual layout and erased overlap to come up with this image. I like this a lot. It matches the prototype almost exactly and gives me the small town (one town!) feel that I am after.

Now I will print the backdrop photo and install it to the layout. Stay tuned for finished photos later today or maybe tomorrow (before the Daytona 500 starts).





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Check the Shadows



Sat, 2018-02-17 11:05 — JC Shall

Jim, best to check the shadows in the photo (if you plan to use it) for compatibility with that on your layout. Can you manipulate that in Photoshop?

-Jack

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As you can see in this

Sat, 2018-02-17 11:06 — James Six

I could have driven to Sturgis (45 minutes away) and taken my own photos. Problem is, there remains a lot of snow on the ground and it's ugly outside! Its a whole lot easier to just use Google maps to get the photo images to use - especially if you live in another state a long way from where you are modeling.

The internet, Google, Google maps, and Photoshop (Elements) are simply fantastic tools that were not available to us not too many years ago. Why buy commercial backdrops when you can create your own and not only that, you can create them from the actual location (or some other location) that you are modeling? This way nobody else will have the same backdrops that you will have. I really don't want to visit somebody's layout and see the same backdrops and structures that are on my layout.



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Wow



Sat, 2018-02-17 11:11 — Bessemer Bob

Just amazing the level of detail now obtainable!

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Check the Shadows

Sat, 2018-02-17 11:11 — James Six

Good point Jack. In short, yes, I can adjust the shadows with Photoshop. Problem is that my layout room has a couple dozen lights along the length of the room and the "shadowing" on the buildings is the same on both sides, and brighter on the faces toward the aisle.

No matter how the shadows are in the photos they aren't going to match my model structures. My only hope would be to use backdrop photos with the building faces toward the camera in the bright sunlight. I couldn't do so with this backdrop photo because when looking at this area of my layout the viewer is looking south, . . . into the sun. So I chose the street location for the photo looking south, also into the sun.

Compromises, compromises, compromises, . . . a love/hate affair! 😞



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Modeling Sturgis MI in 1927- A one Town Layout

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — James Six [Layout design](#)
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UPDATED TRACK PLAN - [Click on track plan to enlarge](#)



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Comments

A Cloudy Day

Sat, 2018-02-17 11:19 — JC Shall

Jim, if the shadow thing doesn't work out in the final print, maybe you could try taking similar photos this summer on an overcast day. That might minimize the shadow and contrast problem.

Having said that, if the actual installed backdrop looks the same as in your mockup, it might not really matter at all.

-Jack

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Foreground



Sat, 2018-02-17 11:44 — [chris.mincemoyer](#)

In my honest opinion, the foreground scene is strong enough that the backdrop truly enhances the scene and to me the shadows don't cause an issue. If there was a shadow across the intersection that would be a different story.

On another note, I can retire at anytime now, and must retire in 5 years, your progress during your retired years sure has me looking forward to that decision for me!

Chris

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Chris, you make a real good

Sat, 2018-02-17 12:02 — [James Six](#)

Chris, you make a real good point. Since printing my first backdrop photo several years ago I have always believed that such backdrops should NOT be dramatic in any way. The backdrop is there to support the 3D modeling and not draw attention. So, backdrops should be "typical" and not include anything bright, large, or attention-getting in any way. The backdrop truly is the "supporting cast".

The above said, I believe that we are in the digital age of model railroading. I see the Internet, digital photography, 3D printing, Google images, Google maps, Google maps "street view" and Photoshop all as awesome tools that I use almost daily. The backdrop photo I presented above was just screen captures from Google maps street view.

I find it sad that so few of us have learned to make good use of these digital tools at our disposal. Though retired I am still teaching a few college engineer courses including "Constrain-based Modeling", that is 3D Modeling using SolidWorks. In the not too distant future I will be 3D modeling and printing buildings, components of buildings and freight cars. I have access to two very nice 3D printers at the university! Stay tuned.



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Based on your input I

Sat, 2018-02-17 13:28 — [James Six](#)

Based on your input I Photoshopped the backdrop photo some more, mainly playing with shadowing. It is good enough for me now. Time to print and install it.



Below is the original screen shot.

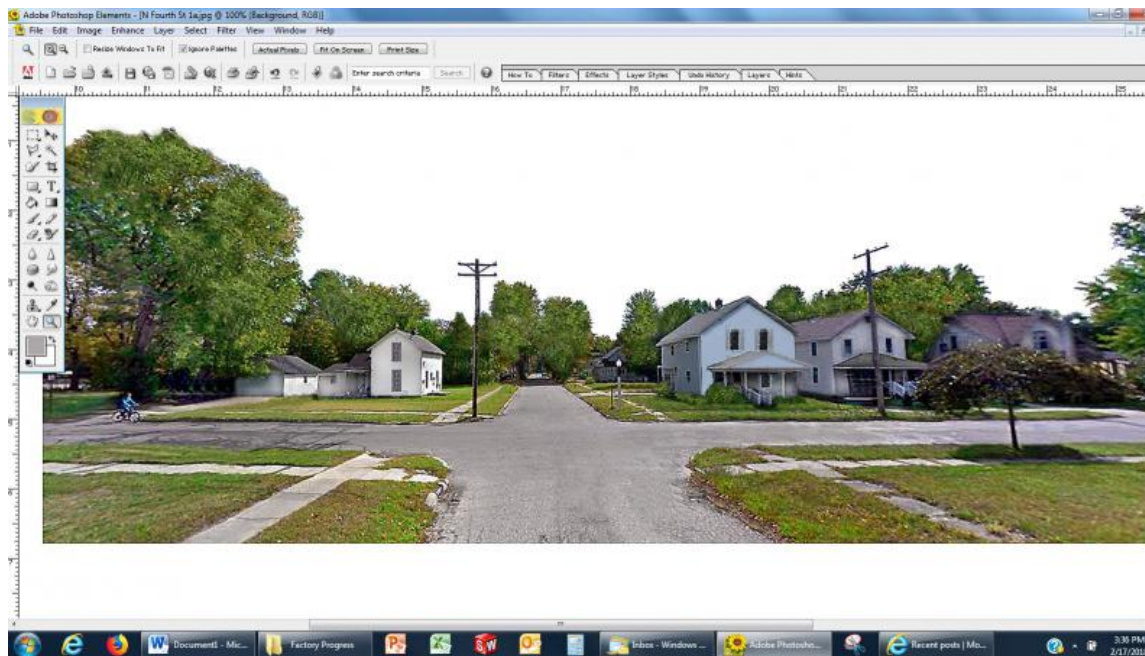


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Here is what the backdrop

Sat, 2018-02-17 13:38 — James Six

Here is what the backdrop photo looks like on my computer screen as I edited it.



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Perfect Match on Street Coloring

Sat, 2018-02-17 13:38 — JackM

Jim,

I remember the article your pal Tom did in MR on having streets blend into the backdrop. Do you do the same, that is build up a transition between the horizontal benchwork and the vertical backdrop. An how do you match the colors so perfectly. The break between horizontal and vertical is seamless. Just terrific.

Jack

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Perfect Match on Street Coloring

Sat, 2018-02-17 13:45 — James Six

Yes I do Jack. Tom and I developed the road into the photo backdrop method together. Is is nice having a partner on these things to develop methods and techniques with input from us both. In fact, here is a pecture of Tom teaching me one of his scenery techniques.



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Yes, Print It



Sat, 2018-02-17 14:25 — JC Shall

I agree Jim, it's time to print. What a dramatic change in the shadows and shading! I wish I had a fraction of your skills with Photoshop.

Pretty sneaky how you eliminated those pesky "modern" details like automobiles, signage, fire hydrants and plastic trash bins



-Jack

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Yes, Print It

Sat, 2018-02-17 15:51 — James Six

Photoshop skills are good skills to have. I use Photoshop Elements which does everything that we model railroaders will ever need. This version of Photoshop is hundreds and hundreds of dollars less expensive than full blown Photoshop. Go to eBay and get it for \$10 or \$20. You do not need a new version. Mine is more than ten years old and works perfectly.



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I ran into a little trouble.

Sat, 2018-02-17 18:24 — James Six

I ran into a little trouble. My backdrop was too narrow for the space I want to fit into. So, I went back to Google maps and came up with some screen captures to splice onto my photo. Here are the results. I believe that this will work. I will print and install it tomorrow. Been at this most of the day and I am burned out for now.

Again, your comments, suggestions, and even criticisms are welcome.



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Comments

I am a little surprised that

Sun, 2018-02-18 07:50 — James Six

I am a little surprised that more of you have not commented on using Google Maps street view to acquire screen captures for photo backdrops. IMO this is a fantastic tool for layout building.

Puzzled in Millersburg . . . 😊

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Jim, it is an excellent tool



Sun, 2018-02-18 08:56 — Virginian and L...

Jim, it is an excellent tool for many locations. It does require some skill with photo editing software. My wife is rather skilled with it, I am not. I suspect many folks become confused, intimidated, or unwilling to go through the learning curve to acquire the skill to use the software. For many of us we tend to think in ways that seem to be foreign to the folks that design computer software. I refer to them as computer weenies quite often.

I do like the way you and your friend Tom have added the depth with street scenes that go quite a ways into the back drop. In the area I have chosen to model there were some major changes to the area prior to the advent of Google earth. There was lots of urban renewal, the interstate highway system blasted through town and the industry that was the lifeblood of the area really declined and that had a major affect on everything else. Throw in some major fires so many things could be sold to the insurance company and there are now weed filled lots instead of multi-story industrial structures.

With that said there might be a few places it could work me but the vast majority have changed way to much for me to use modern images. Fortunately for me I have found a book documenting the area by JJ Young who took many photographs of things I was interested in modeling. Even though I do not have the views suitable for a back drop I have excellent historical info available for building models!

I am sure that there will be folks inspired by your efforts in this regard. I believe there was an article on how to do something similar with creating photo backdrops in this magazine a while back. Remember lots of folks read with out ever posting so just because there are not lots of comments don't think there are not lots of readers. Just look at the count of reads. Not all of them are mine!

Rob in Texas

[prep for an operating session](#) • [Delving into the past](#) • [The club blog](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDmC2GjPPfARE7xdZPSjGaw/videos>

<http://www.etmrc.org/>

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Using Google



Sun, 2018-02-18 09:12 — JC Shall

Jim, I confess that it never occurred to me to use Goggle's street views as a source of photos. As you know, I'm following along with interest. I plan to look into this myself down the road when I get to that area of work.

And don't judge the interest in the blog or topic by the number of responses. As Rob says, just look at the post views count, and I think you'll have your answer. I personally have been interested in *all* of your writings as your approach and attitudes about the hobby closely parallel my own views.

-Jack

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Jim, it is an excellent tool

Sun, 2018-02-18 09:16 — James Six

Rob, you are a true friend. I really appreciate you support and your always insightful input. Again, you make a good point. Google maps street view is a great tool, especially for contemporary modelers for obvious reasons. For folks like you and me that are modeling farther back in time the needed scenes have changed -- more so for you than me.

Last evening while working on my backdrop I soon discovered that my photo was not wide enough for where it needed to be installed. I would have to widen the photos. So, back to Google maps I went only to discover that the flanking areas of the cross street were changed too much (from the 1920s) to be useful. Hmmmm . . . The solution was to surf the neighborhood to find an area that looked like I think my street would have appeared. That worked and I did more screen captures. Who will ever know that I cheated other than those reading these words.

This is where Photoshop skills come into play. I needed to splice these new screen captures to my existing photo. I widened the digital "canvas" and pasted the new scenes into place. They had to be sized accordingly, exposure and contrast balanced to match my existing photo, trees had to be removed and some moved, etc., etc. Not everyone has the Photoshop skills developed enough to do this.

This brings me to my point. That is, not everyone had skills needed to install realistic scenery - until then learned how. Not everyone had skills needed to weather models - until they learned, . . . and so on. We are always needing to learn new skills and how to use new tools. The hobby has been this way from its earliest times and always will be. This "problem" parallels all industry and jobs of all kinds. As the tools advance the users have to learn how to use them. That ain't gonna change.

On the upside, the quality of our modeling continues to get better and better. The best of what model railroaders did in the 1960s would never be accepted by most of us today.



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"Gentlemen...Start your Printers!"



Sun, 2018-02-18 09:40 — Jeff Youst

Great progress James. Regarding "The Great American Race" today, I don't know if you have a favorite driver among the crop of youngsters these days, but you have to be pulling for #66 - Mark Thompson. He's starting dead last on the field in 40th position. The reason to root: he's 66 years old and a Vietnam Vet. Cripe, with the way history is being deleted from the curriculum, the 20 somethings on the front row probably didn't even study that in school. Once the melee of "The Big One" settles down, hopefully he'll be in a position to do all us older folk a solid and garner a top 20. Pitchers and Catchers reporting to camp and The Daytona 500 on TV...Spring is near for sure!

Jeff EL Marion 2nd (Chicago) Sub 1964

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Google Street View: problems and opportunities

Sun, 2018-02-18 09:50 — ackislander

i have downloaded a lot of Google Street Views. The major problem I have found using them directly on the layout is that the resolution isn't very good. That's fine with vegetation, not so much with structures.

i am interested that no one -- to my limited knowledge -- has set up a photoshop service for fellow modelers. If modelers hire other modelers to build, paint, and weather kits or install DCC and sound, would they not pay other modelers to modify photographs for custom backdrops and background models?

i see the client collecting photos from Street Views or wherever, outlining their needs to the graphic artist, and getting back a series of low res prints to refine before getting a final custom product.

Would it cost? Yes. But what is the cost of photoshop and what is the cost of the learning curve to do it oneself?

I've deliberately used the lowercase for "photoshop" to make the idea generic. There are many equivalent packages in use now, some better or cheaper than Photoshop. I'm agnostic about the package; that's up to the artist.

Tom Johnson and Mike Confalone: want to talk business?

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Google Street View: problems and opportunities

Sun, 2018-02-18 10:11 — James Six

I have been using Photoshop for some fifteen years now - I think. I have taught classes on using it and done many clinics on creating photo backdrops with Photoshop at NMRA conventions. It is not the easiest software to learn to use. The first time I tried to use it I walked away in anger after about ten minutes. I came back and later a bit longer before walking away. Then the light came on and I learned it fast.

I use Photoshop Elements 2.0 more than any other version. It is the easiest to use and you can buy it on eBay for about \$10. Yes, you read that right. \$10. I have much newer versions, but like version 2.0 the best.

As for Google maps street views, I increase resolution and focus with Photoshop. I will put my backdrop photos up against any out there, but this ain't no contest. LOL

I have since corrected the shadowing in this photo.



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Jucing the colors

Sun, 2018-02-18 10:22 — James Six

I have found that a photo will look perfect on the computer monitor, but a but faded when printed. To compensate for this I "juice" the color a little by turning up the color intensity before printing. I also add the sky color so when I cut our the top edge any print that I don't get just right blends with my backdrop sky.

See below.

Before increasing color intensity.



After increasing color intensity.



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Photoshop Elements 11

Sun, 2018-02-18 11:52 — fecbill

I have PE 11 and have used it a few times. I am glad that I am not the only one that got mad, frustrated, etc and gave up. I do need to get back on it and play so I can learn some of the tricks.

Bill Michael

Modeling GST, generic southern town, circa 1950-62

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I too have Photoshop Elements

Sun, 2018-02-18 12:10 — James Six

I too have Photoshop Elements 11 and have not figured it out yet, but I will! LOL



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Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — James Six

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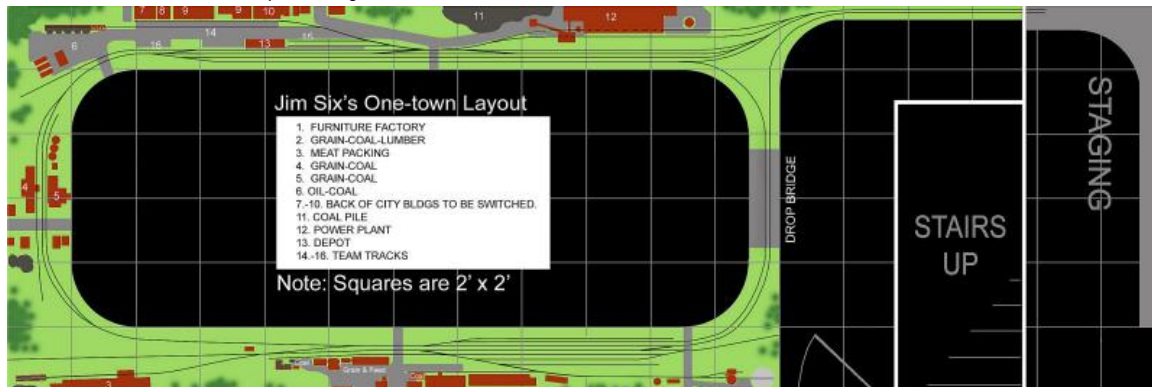
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Comments

I have taught training

Tue, 2018-02-20 12:41 — James Six

I have taught training classes on MS Windows, Excel, Word, Lotus 123, Photoshop Elements, AutoCAD, Inventor, SolidWorks, and other software but I have never had software training of any kind myself! I have always figured them out myself. I guess there is at least one advantage to Aspergers!!! LOL



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Modeling 1925 thru 1935



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Changing Seasons

Tue, 2018-02-20 16:15 — James Six

Jack, to answer your Photoshop questions, . . .

1. How did I shift the colors from fall (really southern winter!) to supper time colors?

Go to ENHANCE, then ADJUST COLORS, then select HUE/SATURATION. In the EDIT box you can select which color you want to edit. I chose YELLOW. Next adjust the HUE. I went to the right toward green hue. The next was to leave there and ADJUST COLORS again. There I increased the SATURATION to where I liked it. That was all that I did.

2. How to make the sky match the backdrop?

This one is simple. Set the BACKGROUND color to match your sky color. This will be a judgement call. Once satisfied with the BACKGROUND COLOR, then using the MAJIC WAND tool select all of the sky. Next, press the DELETE key on your keyboard to get rid of the sky. This makes the entire sky match the BACKGROUND color you selected.

3. Yes. With a good, sharp pair of scissors I cut out along the bottom edge of the sky where it touches the trees, etc. This is somewhat tedious but not difficult. If you wack a few tree branches, so what.

Hope this helps. Keep those questions coming! 😊

Modeling 1925 thru 1935



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Folks, I've taken the past

Wed, 2018-02-21 09:45 — James Six

Folks,

I've taken the past several days off from model railroading. I am in one of those moods where I am questioning if I want to continue being a model railroader or if I want to bail out of the hobby. I've been here before and recovered. I expect this too shall pass.

Modeling 1925 thru 1935



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Sure Hope So!

Wed, 2018-02-21 09:59 — Photo Bud

This place wouldn't be the same if you decided to bail!

Bud (aka John), The Old Curmudgeon

Fan of Northern Pacific and the Rock Island

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questioning whether to continue

Wed, 2018-02-21 18:37 — aleasp

You need to do what's right for you, and only you can make that decision. Your work has been an inspiration to me, and I am sure that many others feel likewise. This is a hobby, not a job, no need to explain or justify it. Whenever it no longer provides fulfillment, you can simply walk away, whether temporarily or for good, but you will be missed.

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I am questioning if I want to

Wed, 2018-02-21 20:29 — Lancaster



I am questioning if I want to continue being a model railroader or if I want to bail out of the hobby.

I got dibbs on your Skill Set.

(...and don't bail, by the way.)

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Aspergers

Wed, 2018-02-21 20:44 — umauma railway

For those who may not understand this may help understand your frustration:

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Anxiety disorder.
- Depression, especially in adolescents.
- Nonverbal learning disorder.
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).
- Social anxiety disorder.

Neil Erickson, Umauma, HI

Visit my [weblog](#).

Experimenting with TOMA

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Aspergers

Thu, 2018-02-22 09:17 — James Six

Neil,

You found me out! LOL You actually gave me a much needed laugh. I feel better and having slept on it for a couple of nights I came to the conclusion that I cannot give this up. I enjoy it all too much and I really like messaging with y'all on a regular basis.

Onward! 👍



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Diagnosed!

Thu, 2018-02-22 10:00 — umauma railway

Jim:

You are not the only one with symptoms. I have never been professionally diagnosed but don't fight the many symptoms. It is odd that we have a hard time with social situations but can write to a group or do a class or presentation (not without anxiety) in front of hundreds.

Glad you can laugh. I just keep starting new projects ;-)

Neil Erickson, Umauma, HI

Visit my [weblog](#).

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I finally got around to

Fri, 2018-02-23 15:35 — James Six

I finally got around to installing the backdrop photo where the road goes into the wall. Here is a photo I just took showing how it looks now. I am rather pleased.



Modeling 1925 thru 1935



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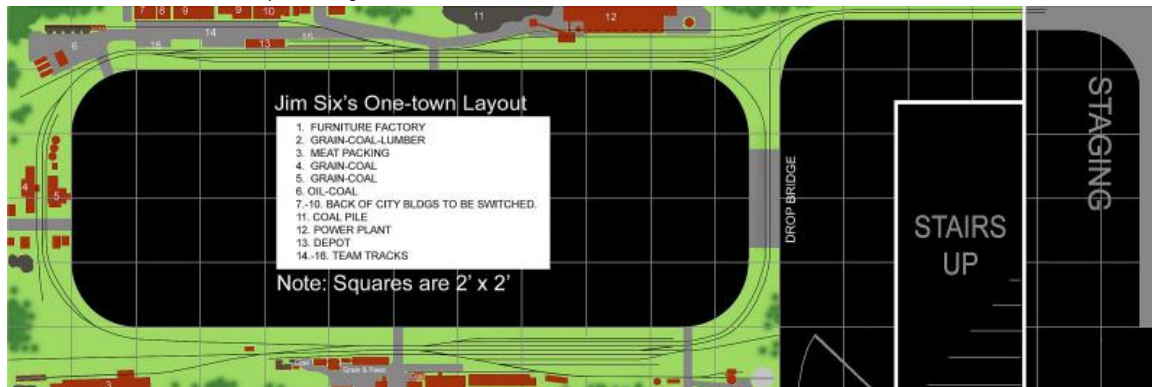
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Comments

Interest perking up with PE

Sun, 2018-02-18 18:59 — umauma railway

Jim:

I too have been following your blog posts here and the other two but have to admit that I was skeptical about using Google Street view for my c1900 layout. Things have changed more than a little but the idea of using Elements to edit out contemporary items opened my eyes.

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You and Tom (and his friend ?) really show what an impact a photo-realistic backdrop can add to a scene. I have been in the Mike from QL camp with regard to an impressionist POV (and really admire his painted backdrops) but the learning curve exists there too. Which approach is right? Either I'm sure.

Building a layout that was along the ocean is a challenge to capture any images but some come up on eBay occasionally so I use these as inspiration. There is one spot that your technique will result in a really good background so I am going to spend some time with PE and try not to throw my laptop into the yard. I also have used Acad for years (SketchUp more recently) and many others so hope some similarities will help with the learning curve.

Great thread. Thanks! (p.s. - hope to see some 4-6-0's gracing the rails soon in Sturgis!)

Neil Erickson, Umauma, HI

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Photoshop Elements 2.0

Sun, 2018-02-18 19:33 — Free-Mo Tim

Jim,

I'm curious.....what operating system (Apple/ Windows XP/ Windows 10) you're using with P.E. ver. 2?

Thanks in advance!

Tim Moran Akron, OH

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Photoshop Elements 2.0

Mon, 2018-02-19 09:11 — James Six

I am using Windows 7. I also use Windows 10 on another computer. My original Photoshop Elements 2.0 installs and runs perfectly on both.

I said yesterday that I also have Photoshop Elements 11, but I checked and it is Photoshop Elements 12. I got it off eBay about 6 months ago for \$40. I started to learn how to use it during the 500 yesterday and I really like it!



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Elaboration

Mon, 2018-02-19 09:54 — JC Shall

Jim, thanks for taking time to answer my questions. I used to use Photoshop Elements 6, but recently my daughter moved up to the full Photoshop and gave me her old PE 9. I've installed it and will make a serious effort at learning it. The stitching of photos should be a real plus in developing background scenes.

-Jack



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Modeling Sturgis MI in HO-scale NYC/PRR

Mon, 2013-06-03 16:34 — James Six

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Sturgis MI 1925-1935 - One Town Layout

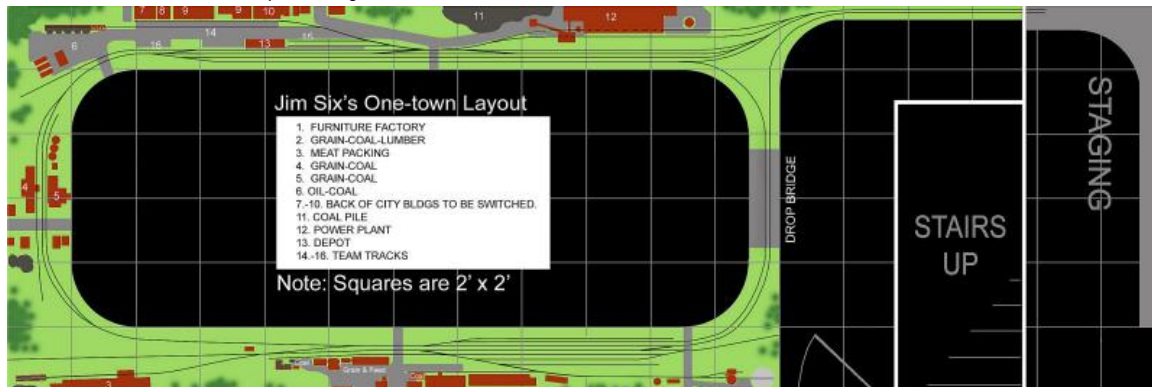
This blog is about my Sturgis Michigan based layout as it continues on toward completion - someday! Those following along are encouraged to make comment, suggestions, and to ask questions. The layout plan shown here has been updated to my current plan. This is your opportunity to become part of the process during development of the layout.

My other blogs will focus on what they are intended for.

- [Modeling 1900-1940 \(Was Depression Era Modeling\)](#) >> [click to view](#)
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You will find great information and discussion there. Check them out.

UPDATED TRACK PLAN - [Click on track plan to enlarge](#)



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Comments

I have taught training

Tue, 2018-02-20 12:41 — James Six

I have taught training classes on MS Windows, Excel, Word, Lotus 123, Photoshop Elements, AutoCAD, Inventor, SolidWorks, and other software but I have never had software training of any kind myself! I have always figured them out myself. I guess there is at least one advantage to Aspergers!!! LOL



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Changing Seasons

Tue, 2018-02-20 16:15 — James Six

Jack, to answer your Photoshop questions, . . .

1. How did I shift the colors from fall (really southern winter!) to supper time colors?

Go to ENHANCE, then ADJUST COLORS, then select HUE/SATURATION. In the EDIT box you can select which color you want to edit. I chose YELLOW. Next adjust the HUE. I went to the right toward green hue. The next was to leave there and ADJUST COLORS again. There I increased the SATURATION to where I liked it. That was all that I did.

2. How to make the sky match the backdrop?

This one is simple. Set the BACKGROUND color to match your sky color. This will be a judgement call. Once satisfied with the BACKGROUND COLOR, then using the MAJIC WAND tool select all of the sky. Next, press the DELETE key on your keyboard to get rid of the sky. This makes the entire sky match the BACKGROUND color you selected.

3. Yes. With a good, sharp pair of scissors I cut out along the bottom edge of the sky where it touches the trees, etc. This is somewhat tedious but not difficult. If you wack a few tree branches, so what.

Hope this helps. Keep those questions coming! 😊

Modeling 1925 thru 1935



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Folks, I've taken the past

Wed, 2018-02-21 09:45 — James Six

Folks,

I've taken the past several days off from model railroading. I am in one of those moods where I am questioning if I want to continue being a model railroader or if I want to bail out of the hobby. I've been here before and recovered. I expect this too shall pass.

Modeling 1925 thru 1935



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Sure Hope So!

Wed, 2018-02-21 09:59 — Photo Bud

This place wouldn't be the same if you decided to bail!

Bud (aka John), The Old Curmudgeon

Fan of Northern Pacific and the Rock Island

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questioning whether to continue

Wed, 2018-02-21 18:37 — aleasp

You need to do what's right for you, and only you can make that decision. Your work has been an inspiration to me, and I am sure that many others feel likewise. This is a hobby, not a job, no need to explain or justify it. Whenever it no longer provides fulfillment, you can simply walk away, whether temporarily or for good, but you will be missed.

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I am questioning if I want to

Wed, 2018-02-21 20:29 — Lancaster



I am questioning if I want to continue being a model railroader or if I want to bail out of the hobby.

I got dibbs on your Skill Set.

(...and don't bail, by the way.)

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Aspergers

Wed, 2018-02-21 20:44 — umauma railway

For those who may not understand this may help understand your frustration:

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Anxiety disorder.
- Depression, especially in adolescents.
- Nonverbal learning disorder.
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).
- Social anxiety disorder.

Neil Erickson, Umauma, HI

Visit my [weblog](#).

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Aspergers

Thu, 2018-02-22 09:17 — James Six

Neil,

You found me out! LOL You actually gave me a much needed laugh. I feel better and having slept on it for a couple of nights I came to the conclusion that I cannot give this up. I enjoy it all too much and I really like messaging with y'all on a regular basis.

Onward! 👍



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Diagnosed!

Thu, 2018-02-22 10:00 — umauma railway

Jim:

You are not the only one with symptoms. I have never been professionally diagnosed but don't fight the many symptoms. It is odd that we have a hard time with social situations but can write to a group or do a class or presentation (not without anxiety) in front of hundreds.

Glad you can laugh. I just keep starting new projects ;-)

Neil Erickson, Umauma, HI

Visit my [weblog](#).

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I finally got around to

Fri, 2018-02-23 15:35 — James Six

I finally got around to installing the backdrop photo where the road goes into the wall. Here is a photo I just took showing how it looks now. I am rather pleased.



Modeling 1925 thru 1935



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Sturgis MI 1925-1935 - One Town Layout

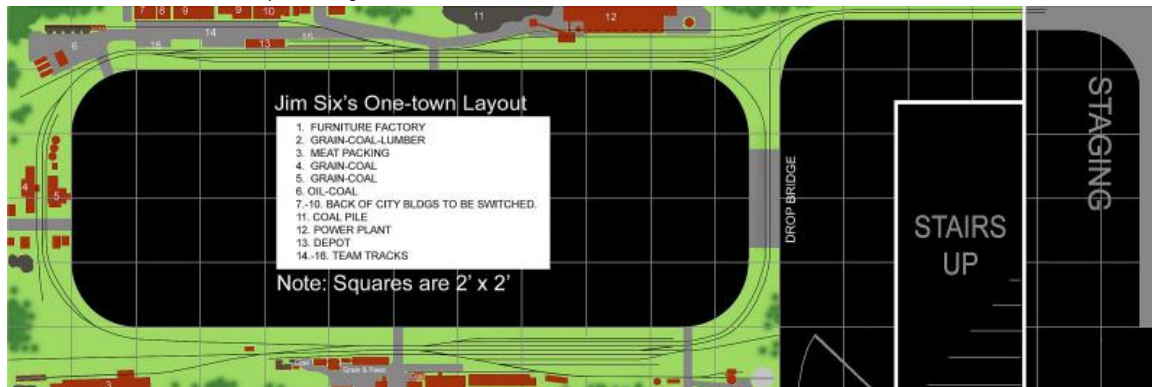
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Spot On

Fri, 2018-02-23 15:51 — JC Shall

Jim, the color matching on the road and scenery is spot on! A very nice scene, indeed. I also think you did a good job with the sizing of the houses, power pole, etc. The perspective is great.

-Jack

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Pleased...And So You Should Be

Fri, 2018-02-23 16:24 — kansaspacific1

Jim:

The sizing, perspective, and blending into the 3 D couldn't be better.

Great Job!

I got sidelined from my Peppard Seed mockup by some full scale bathroom work. Maybe by tomorrow in the One-Town blog.

Chuck

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