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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concept and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Jim, I just saw the heads up

Thu, 2018-01-04 16:59 — Virginian and L...

Jim, I just saw the heads up on your other blog so let me throw a log on the fire. For me my dream layout was the one town railroad or one metropolitan area. I just did not realize it till some discussion with you and some other modelers.

The concept is a good one and can come with as many of the trappings of the mega railroads as one wants to add and has the budget for. It can save huge amounts of resources in regard to signal systems for example since there might only be three blocks involved instead of 30 or more. It would also save on passing track turn outs since a shorter distance would need fewer of them.

With not trying to shoe horn 100s of miles into tens of feet realism goes up several orders of magnitude. One 50 car train looks much better than trying to get 4 12 car trains past each other. Even if it is less than 50 cars fewer longer trains look better to me than more short ones.

Structures and scenery can be built so it towers above the trains, the buildings will look like they can actually do something with several car loads of business. If modeling a small steel mill for example it is likely producing 1000 tons of product per day every day and it needs to leave by train.



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By limiting the geographic area in size one can eliminate some of the compression of the layout and when the layout relaxes so can we.

It will also allow the use of larger number turnouts and larger radius curves which will make things look better.

I'll stop here so more folks can add their thoughts on a great topic.

Rob in Texas

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## Explanation and more info

Thu, 2018-01-04 17:22 — James Six

I posted a larger image of the banner photo below. Click on it to enlarge. The town is a loose representation of Sturgis Michigan located on the old Grand Rapids and Indiana (PRR) and interchanges with the New York Central. I want to have sufficient equipment to operate in any year from 1925 up to 1939.

Everything you see here is still in the construction phase, though much of it is getting pretty far along now. You are looking down 24 feet of a 2 foot wide shelf layout. Track height ranges between 56" and 57" off the floor. There are 19 customer locations to spot freight cars for five companies and a team track. Obviously, there are multiple places to spot cars at each customer.

The layout continues to the right curving parallel to what is pictured here. That other side is abandoned and will be ripped out and replaced. I just don't like it so it will be replaced. The radius of curvature of the mainline is 44" at the tightest. The overall layout is 12' x 24' with a planned extension of some 24 feet into my workshop. Not sure if the extension will have scenery of just be a staging yard. The tightest radius on the layout presently is 42".

As you can see, the layout is spread out. Nothing is crowded. You are looking at only one part of one town. The rest of the town will be on the other side of the layout. The layout is designed for local train operation. A local train enters one end of the town from staging arrives at the depot to get orders (a switch list) for switching the town. When done it will exit the other end of the town and return to staging. When the layout is complete this will take from two to four hours to complete.

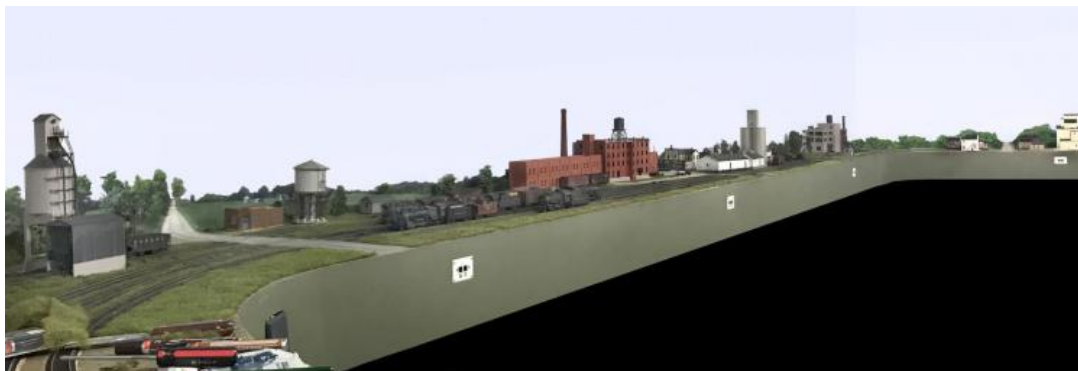
The other side of the layout will have a power plant that will receive 15 to 20 coal loads every other day. There will be other customers too. A separate train will deliver the coal and pick up empties. There will be a fair amount of switching to be done at the power plant. This coal train will interfere with the local which will be switching the town at the same time. Fun. In addition, there will be a couple of through trains (one each direction) and two short passenger trains (one each direction) that the local and the coal trains will have to dodge and maneuver around. All of this adds to the jobs adding realism and time to the operating session.

There is a small yard where I have way too many locomotives and cabooses resting. There is a locomotive service facility at the far left. The (working) turntable and (mock) roundhouse are out of sight just off the photo to the left.

The red brick factory is a busy furniture factory. Beyond the furniture factory is a business for supplies, feeds, seeds, grains, lumber, and coal. moving past this business is a meat packing plant for reefers. Around the corner is more town which includes another grain elevator and bulk oil dealer. The depot is out of sight across from the elevator.

Well, there you have my run-down of what I have and what I am doing. I would like to get started discussing design concept and variations that will be helpful to others. Please feel free to speak up.

Jim Six, Millersburg IN





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## The Other Side of Sturgis



Thu, 2018-01-04 17:41 — JC Shall

Jim, if I recall correctly (and I often don't) you published a track plan of the Sturgis layout 4 or 5 years ago. The side shown above was the NYC and the other side of the room was the Pennsy (which featured a couple coal using industries).

If I'm correct, what is it that you don't like on this "un-featured" side that you've decided to tear it out?

**-Jack**

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## One town layouts.



Thu, 2018-01-04 17:57 — Rob Shilling

I will be following this blog to see what others are coming up with. A few years back there was a guy in England (or I think it was England) named Jon Grant who built short modular layouts for display. The layouts were basically four modules, but I am not sure how long they were. One was called "Sweet Home Chicago." The other was "Sweet Home Alabama", which was a more rural layout. I think he had another set, but can't recall what it was. He had his trains made up in cassettes and they would enter from one end and go to the other with some switching available if he wanted too. I haven't seen Jon post anything in a few years.

*Rob Shilling*

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## The Other Side of Sturgis

Thu, 2018-01-04 18:08 — James Six

Hi Jack,

Yes, Tony K pushed me to do a track plan which was published in MRP. There was not enough thought put into it and it did not work out. The other side did not offer the industries or the switching that I like. After operating with it for a few years it fell out of favor. About that time I had my heart surgery and had a lot of time to think about it. The more I thought about it the less I liked it. I had already rebuilt that side three different times and it never worked out.

So, I will rip it out and start over with the main focus of that side being the power plant.



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## Another nice thing the 42



Thu, 2018-01-04 18:24 — Virginian and L...

Another nice thing the 42 inch plus radius gives the layout is very good operation of all equipment and great appearance. By not crowding everything into the place those broad curves will really have a visual impact. Since operators are on the inside of the curves they will look better than they would from the outside. Very commendable choice.

James what length passenger cars ran on your branch? I suspect they would be the longest piece of equipment on your line.

On a side note the overall photo just screams realistic setting. The layout looks very good and realistic.

Rob in Texas

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## One town layout

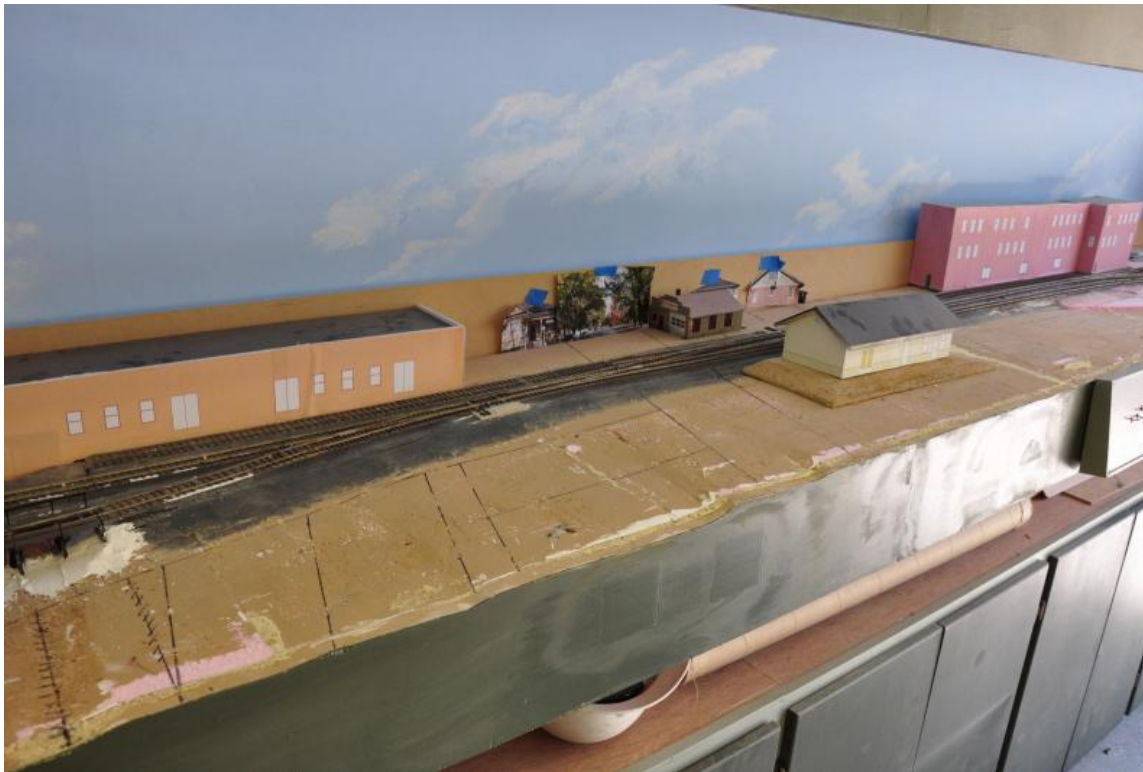


Thu, 2018-01-04 19:07 — Don Hanley

I think that the one town layout is a concept that can have as much change to model railroading as much as the linear concept did. The one town concept also fits nicely with the TOMA concept promoted here at MRH. What I hadn't realized is that I swerved into the one town concept back in the mid 90's, but never thought about promoting the concept. Thank you Jim for promoting the concept and giving it a name.

An advantage I see to the one town layout is the ability to realistically model structures to full size or nearly full size, excluding depth. I find it unrealistic to see one or two 40' or 50' boxcars at an industry that is only 30' x 60'. The size of the industry can't produce enough product to service the number of cars we want to put on the siding servicing it.

Here is a picture of a pair temporary structures that I have on my layout. I use these structures to give a sense of proportion for the overall scene.



The structure on the right can realistically accommodate two or three cars at a time, the structure on the left one or two. Having the larger structures I believe adds to the realism of the scene. It matches closer to what we see in real life.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## Different approach of interest?

Thu, 2018-01-04 19:08 — donm

For a different approach to a one town layout, click on the blog link below my signature line. The HO scale Southern Mountain Railroad attempts to emulate a busy mountain railroad in a room of about 12' x 12'. Small room layouts don't have to be branch lines, but there are costs involved.

Don Mitchell



<http://mrhmag.com/blog/donm>

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## One town layout inspiration

Thu, 2018-01-04 19:16 — Sn2modeler

While I'm not sure I can restrict my own modeling to one town (I'm still young enough to build more towns and have the space) I often recommend to others with limited space to go the route of one town....

Clark Probst's M&STL layout was a great example of a one town layout. He modeled 2 of three major switching areas of the M&STL in Mason City (later I think he added a third area). My memory is he did not operate the through trains, only the two local jobs. It was assumed the through trains had come through at other times of the day. So he had little or no need for off layout staging...

There are many locations like this, even narrow gauge towns that are sufficiently large enough with sufficient switching, that they are interesting to operate....I guess my Sn2 modules serve as a one town layout with some open running right now....

For larger scales such as S and O, one town layouts work out well. Such scales consume large amount of space, so leave insufficient running run between towns (unless built in a grocery store). So anyone modeling in these larger scales might want to consider one town modeling and tracking this thread.

David Keith

<http://www.sn2modeler.com>

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## Another nice thing the42

Thu, 2018-01-04 19:44 — James Six

I love the broad radius. 42" min is a lot. As for passenger cars on the GR&I I have done no research yet. But as you point out they will be the longest rolling stock on the layout.

Jim Six



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### A solution for folks that don't have a lot of room

Fri, 2018-01-05 09:14 — James Six

This blog is really intended for people that don't have space for a large layout although the too are welcome here.

The one thing that has driven me to a one-town layout is that I had three towns earlier on. Problem was that when the locomotive was on one town the caboose was still in the middle of the previous town. I changed to two towns and the problem was only a bit better.

Also the run time between two towns is way too short. Modelers have devised fast clocks which hurry operation and detract from the feel of realism. Others stop trains in tunnels to lengthen the time between towns. That does not work for me. With one town time is "real time" which maximizes the feel of realism.

it takes a lot of time to work my town. Sidings are long. Buildings are long. Buildings are spread out. There is almost no compression.

Jim Six,   Millersburg IN

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## Minimum radius



Thu, 2018-01-04 20:06 — sailormatlac

@David, I like Clark's approach about the through trains. Clever and saves a lot of headaches. Who said we had to replicate a 24h day! ;-) Selective compression works in terms of space, but also in terms of time. ;-)

@James: I no longer consider any radius under 30" to be acceptable in HO. 42" is certainly a very nice when possible. Another thing I no longer look back are turnouts. I made #8 my standard and after designing many small layouts, I came to the conclusion when you do your homework right, you can achieve excellent results in minimal space. This is particularly important when doing a lot of switching with steam locomotives. It really improves operation. BTW, I wasn't aware the other side of Sturgis never came to a decent conclusion. I looked for picture of that part of your layout in the past with no results. Now I know why. I think it is important to do document failure as much as success.

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>

Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>

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## long time



Thu, 2018-01-04 20:19 — sailormatlac

I have the same problem, when the caboose is in the other town, my suspension of disbelief stop to work. Very long and realistic sidings helps to enjoy doing switching moves as you can admire the locomotive coasting for a long time among the nice scenery. On the other hand, capturing the impression of running on the mainline is always hard to do without a lot of space. Some have succeed in this, but their layouts are generally on the large side and they also tried to kept towns to a minimum. Mike Confalone did a neat job simply because his railroad is extremely mundane and the spacing between point of interest quite important. Sometimes I think about my childhood layout which was a vulgar 4' x 4' plank of plywood with a runaround. As ridiculous as it was, at one point I did my best so the bridge scene was realistic enough to be a railfan spot. I recall spending hours watching my P2K 0-8-0 pulling a freight consist at low speed. It seemed large and realistic simply because my standpoint was realistic, exactly how I would have railfanned a real railroad overpass. What I learned from that layout was that a small focussed object helps you to get immersed in the scenery. It's why I like one town layouts. You truly experience one place fully. Compressing distance is almost impossible, thus one location seems right for many people.

All that reminds me Tom Johnson's excellent INRAIL layout, which basically have very few towns (he even went as far as wiping out roads and buildings to make it looks larger). He models the right of way. If the grain elevator is in the middle of nowhere, he doesn't bother adding a street and a few stores to tell us there is a town. We somehow get it. And anyone who have seen his work wouldn't call it diminutive at all.

Matt

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## Matt — the other side

Fri, 2018-01-05 09:24 — James Six

Matt,

Let me think about that. I am embarrassed by the other side of the layout. Right now it is a big storage shelf for mo rolling stock and construction materials. I guess I could share some earlier photos taken before I abandoned it.

Jim



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## What you lose with one station

Thu, 2018-01-04 20:48 — dave1905

What a one station layout loses is the dispatching and through freight operations. Dispatching devolves to just setting the sequence that trains entering the station and through freights are just a mechanism to move cars in and out of staging. On a real railroad, the vast majority of train crews and the vast majority of a railroad's revenue is the over the road business.

I prefer to try and balance local, yard and through operations. Different strokes.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## I'm building a "one town"

Thu, 2018-01-04 23:35 — baronjutter

I'm building a "one town" layout right now and can't possibly fit everything I want into it along with operational realism. So instead what I'm doing is settling on at least having an operable little freight area but then with a busy passenger station that's what I'm calling an "animated backdrop". It's a station up against the wall and a length of track leading into a tunnel large enough and angled in a way to hide a full train. Two trains will go back and forth from this tunnel visiting the station and going back out giving the illusion of a passenger service coming and going from the outside world. It's not perfect, but systems like this can be a fun way to add things you wouldn't otherwise be able to fit into a smaller layout. I'll be doing something similar with a tram as well.

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## "the dispatching and through

Fri, 2018-01-05 00:19 — ctxmf74

*"the dispatching and through freight operations"*

Most modelers don't have the space to model more than a few miles of mainline in HO scale so mainline operations are usually pretty contrived. A one town layout using the same length of track could be very realistic however. The ends of the run could be staging and the onscene modeling beginning with the approach with industries, the town proper with passing siding and perhaps small yard, the depot, etc. then the outskirts of town with more industries, elevators or whatever is suitable. If the town includes a grade crossing with another railroad even better as interchange could be carried out and operators would have to get the trains thru in a timely manner. The number of thru trains would depend on the chosen prototype or freelanced line along with the amount of staging built. If the room is small then TT or N scale could allow similar operating potential. My TT scale layout is in a spare room about 9 by 15 feet, it has staging on one side of the room with a branchline leading to the one town on the opposite wall. The town has a small yard, a few industries and a passenger depot. The local runs from staging to the town and back, a full day's work for the crew(me) .....DaveB



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## Dave B I am thinking along



Fri, 2018-01-05 01:48 — Virginian and L...

Dave B I am thinking along the same lines as you.

For example a scale mile is 60 real feet in ho scale. If one were to model one town or one metro area trains that run through on the main can be represented. Depending on the era and the amount of mainline modeled there could be several towers involved in traffic control. It may still be possible to simulate through trains if desired and even have a meet if desired the options are there.

One need not model a prairie town of 2000 people unless that is what one desires. A one town layout could be multi level and fill a layout with 200 to 300 linear feet of run, or it could be much less. The idea is the ability to model many things full size as Don mentioned above with the exception of depth.

One of the first steps would be to choose an area of interest. If one is free lancing the area it might be easier to model things than a literal reproduction allowing us to capture the flavor of the area.

Once that is done a map or two might be of interest. It is real nice if one can find maps from before as well as of the time period modeled. Photos from the air or hill tops are real nice as well for showing lots of info from a modelers perspective.



Above we have a distance shot of one of the many steel mills in the town I am interested in modeling, this is the Belmont Mill. One thing that might be of interest to folks thinking that one town would not provide enough to model, with in a 15 to 20 minute walk from this mill one could be at any of the following mills, Wheeling Steel Benwood Plant, National Tube Works, Labelle Nail plant and a Tin Mill that was next to it, Wheeling Can Company, Wheeling Corrugating, Wheeling Rolls, Blaw Knox, Wheeling Closure, Wheeling Stamping, Center Foundry, and The top Mill. That just covers the steel industry there were lots of other businesses in the area as well. The picture above is from the early 1900s (before 1920) and was used with permission of the Ohio county Library.



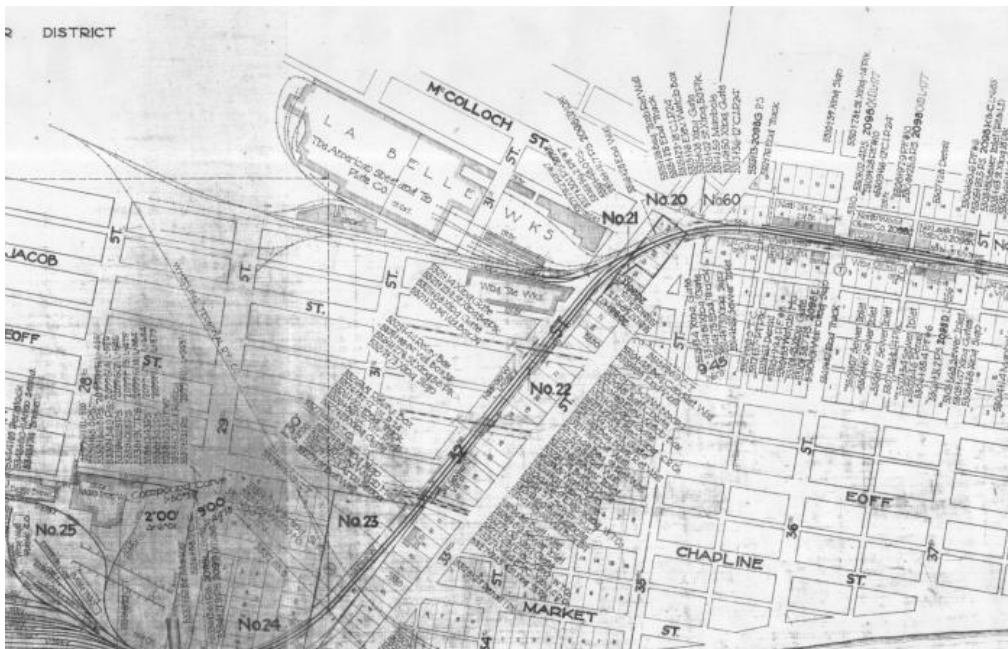
Here is another early photo taken from the air courtesy of the Ohio Co Library. It is about 2 blocks north of the mill in the photo above. Of interest are the two freight stations in the picture, the one on the right is the B&O the one on the left is the Pennsylvania, just out of the picture to the right is the W&LE freight and passenger station. following the rail lines toward the left side of the picture is The Pennsylvania passenger station and just out of the picture to the right is the B&O passenger station.

One thing that is a must have for me from this picture is the large building on the lower right side. As a boy I watched freight cars being pushed into this building from the back seat of my mothers car. I always planed on building a model of that structure.

So one town need not limit you to one station or just one rail line. In the location I have just posted about there was a terminal railway as well.

One other thing to consider if the town you have chosen is a bit large for your space would be to consider just part of it. Eric H. modeled just the B&O freight station and some supporting trackage and put together a really nice layout.

Lots of info can be found from old maps as well. Eric sent me a copy of the following map from some of his research and it has been a huge help with gathering information.



Here is a small portion of it that shows the tracks at the bottom left that feed into the Belmont mill mentioned above, and in the upper section the La Bell plant is shown along with the Wheeling Tile plant.

So one town can go from very simple to about as complicated as one would like and with the smaller area better modeling is possible do to fewer compromises being needed. I hope this adds to the ideas and gets the creative juices flowing.

Rob in Texas

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## One Town Layout - Cambridge, MD in the 1950's

Fri, 2018-01-05 04:38 — PRR 2277

Jim -

This is exactly what I'm doing with my HO Scale shelf layout based on the PRR's operations in the 1950's in Cambridge, MD on the Cambridge Secondary Track (ran between Seaford, DE & Cambridge, MD on the Delmarva Peninsula).

Lance Mindheim did mention a similar idea a few years ago & his posts helped me focus on what I'd like to model in the space that I have to build a layout.

I think this is a great idea for either people just getting into the hobby; don't have enough space for a large layout; or don't have a lot of time to devote to the hobby (for work, family, or other issues).

I have a blog for my layout on Blogger, but (someday), I'll probably post something on MRH blogs.

You can see (the little) I've done here: <https://prrcambridgesectrk.blogspot.com/>

Talk to you later,

Joe

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## I have been operating on

Fri, 2018-01-05 05:11 — MannsCreekRR

I have been operating on model railroads for many years, started in the early 80s. back when I started most layouts were built in 50s thru the 80s with the locomotives, rolling stock, track, and controls of that era. There were some good running stuff then, and people did handlay track, and there was command control but most of the layouts I operated at (especially bigger ones) did not have much (if any) of that stuff, and because of that slow and smooth running did not exist. most people operated too fast, so to keep people busy you had to have a lot to do. there were a lot of layouts that town after town, some stacked in the scene just to provide interest. we also did laps to make distance.

fast forward to the present and beyond. today the controls we have and the running characteristics of the equipment allow us to bring our operating down to a near scale speed. The addition of sound has also really changed the way we operate. Also, as we have learned more about how real railroads operate (switch) many modelers are applying prototype practices to their model operations, which slow down switching even more. I can see as we progress there will be even more movement to prototype running, maybe locomotives that can measure fuel consumption and require the operator to go to a water tank or a fueling area, and other random operating issues and conditions that require the engineer to do other time consuming task or things that slow down operation.

the point is that when operations are slowed down the need to model more fades and the need to model less but closer to scale becomes apparent. If towns are too compact the locomotives (especially diesels) don't have enough time for the sound to respond correctly, so moving things farther apart helps. also, if you start switching with scale speeds you'll discover that it does not take much switching to fill an hour. Start throwing in some of the safety practices, like stopping distance and such and you'll really eat up some time. I have a few Wow decoders and use the brake feature, I also use Sergeant couplers and I have found that those two things alone make switching just a few car spots enough.

I like the "one town" idea. I wonder if some day there will be a way to automate the movement of a series of staged trains, maybe on a train elevator, that will cycle trains through a town or "plant". I could see a town that is being switched by a live local crew (or two) and a tower operator or dispatcher. the time table will be set up in a program that will schedule train departures from the staging and the computer will control the trains out of staging. The computer will notify the tower operator of an approaching train and he will have to route the train through the plant. the local crew will either be notified or have to follow the time table and request time and track. the computer will cause conditions so the trains do not strictly adhere to the schedule, that way the tower operator will have to make judgment calls how to route the trains and keep the flow going.

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### One Town Layout

Fri, 2018-01-05 05:52 — TimGarland

My Seaboard Central focuses on operations in and around Griffin, GA. The area is actually modeled after a secondary NS line that typically only sees two run thru trains and a few locals. Every now and then a unit grain train will go thru Town.

On my version this line has been sold off to the Seaboard Central and the two NS Run thru trains are now Haulage movements that SC provides for NS. Staging in another room is considered the connection to NS in Macon, GA where traffic is interchanged.

i can operate the layout by myself but I prefer to operate it with two or three people. Although I think operating a large layout with multiple operators and a dispatcher would be a blast, I think my 11'6" x 22'6" one Town Layout is perfect for me.

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## Two examples

Fri, 2018-01-05 06:03 — Eric H.

I have a couple of interesting one-town type of layout ideas on my blog. In 2012, I moved to El Paso and began gathering layout ideas for a small spare bedroom in a rental home. I had been modeling the W&LE in metro-Cleveland and wanted to keep to that focus. Some on line research turned up track maps and photos of the W&LE line through Newburgh, adjacent to the portion that had captured my original interest. The doodles and details can be found in [this blog post called How Does It All Fit](#).

Well, the design fit but operator space would have been very tight. This is when I rediscovered a valuation map in my collection that covered a mile of the B&O in Wheeling, W. Va. The ideas also ended up on [my blog in a post titled A Second Option for the Hobby Room](#).

I hope these posts inspire others to consider narrowing the focus to fit the available hobby space.

Eric

Eric Hansmann  
Murfreesboro, TN

Follow along with my railroad modeling:  
<http://designbuildtop.hansmanns.org/>

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## Joe, "I think this is a great

Fri, 2018-01-05 06:04 — sailormatlac

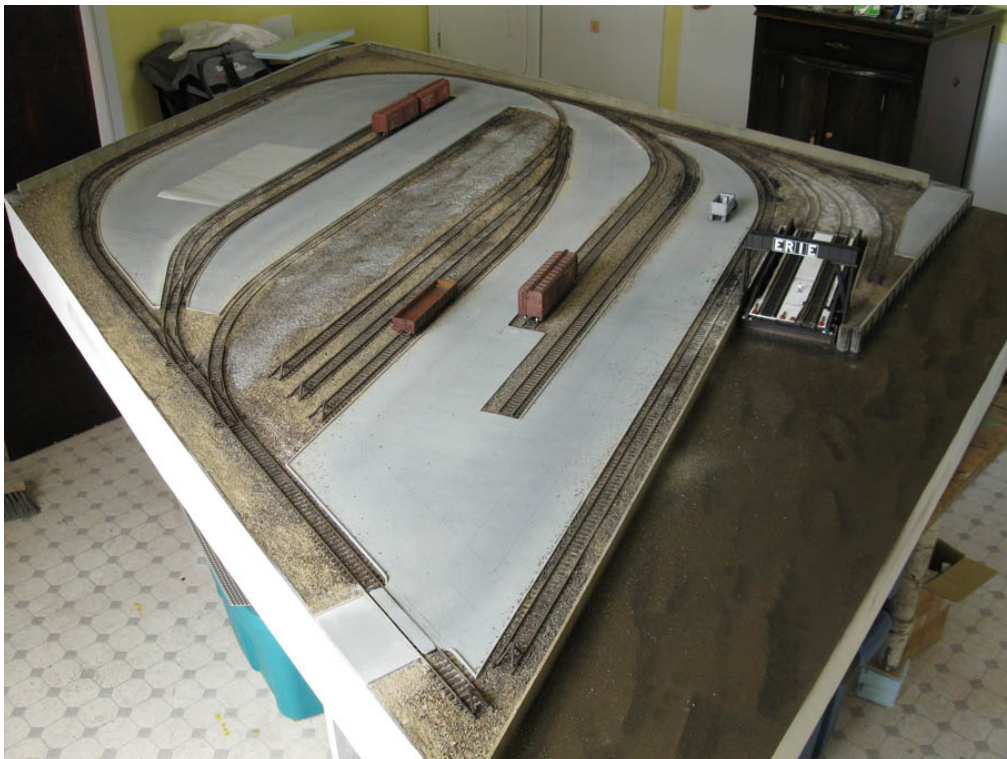
Joe,

"I think this is a great idea for either people just getting into the hobby; don't have enough space for a large layout; or don't have a lot of time to devote to the hobby (for work, family, or other issues)."



I agree, but we also forget the hobby in North America take for granted a satisfying layout is by definition a large empire. There is some stigma to voluntarily stray away from that path. I think every kind of layout is good as long as it provides a great experience to its builder.

Speaking of one town, it should can means anything. A few years ago, I built an island layout based on Erie 149th Street Harlem Station in the Bronx. Like Tim Warris, there is no compression. The model is a faithful representation of what was there. Switching this layout is no piece of cake! It fits in less than 7' x 5'.





Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>

Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>

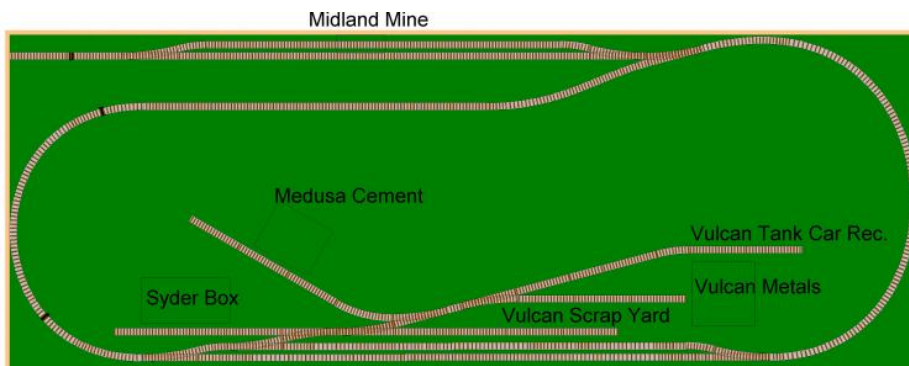
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## One Town Layout

Fri, 2018-01-05 06:42 — Rich\_S

Jim, This is what I've done with my Long Valley Branch layout. It's a N scale layout built on a 24" x 80" hollow core door. That is all the room I have for a layout. The layout is divided in the middle by a small ridge line. The town of Long Valley is on the front of the layout and the interchange yard with the rest of the world is on the rear of the layout.

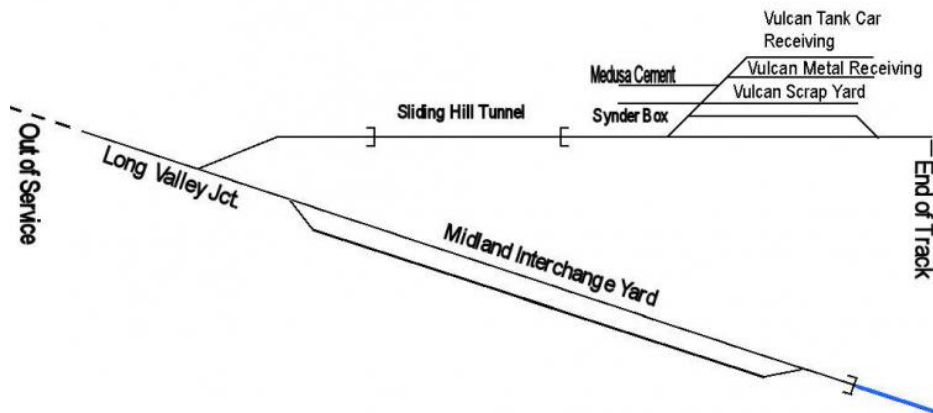
Here is the track plan. The only major change on this plan is the Midland Mine has been removed from the interchange yard. The solid black lines across the tracks indicate tunnel portals.



At first this layout looks like a simple loop, but this is how the layout is operated.

— Long Valley Railroad  
 — Conrail Interchange Track

## Long Valley



Here is the end view of the Layout.



The highway crossing in the above photo is the end of the track for both directions. If you look closely at the crossing, you'll see one side of the road is gravel and the other side is concrete. I did this as a reminder that this crossing is the end of track. The crossing on the Midland Interchange yard side of the layout is rural, while the town of Long Valley has paved roads.

Here are a couple helicopter photos of the layout.

Midland Interchange yard. The yard office is still under construction, as in I'm in need of a Round Tuit to get this project finished 😊



Two of the local industries in Long Valley, Vulcan Steel Fabricators and Medusa Cement.





Cheers,

Rich S.

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## By the way

Fri, 2018-01-05 06:50 — dave1905

Railroads don't have "towns". Road maps have towns. Railroads have stations. Just saying.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## How Much Railroad Do You Need?

Fri, 2018-01-05 08:09 — JackM

Lance Mindheim suggests a good starting place is how much railroad do you need. If you want to entertain eight people for three hours, you need a big railroad. If you operate a couple of times a week by yourself do you really need that much? This pretty much the camp I am in. I live in a town where there a lot of big layouts and occasionally find myself in an operating group. After about two hours I am ready to go home, get kind of bored with it. On my current layout thirty minutes is about my max.

To that end I am changing eras and drawing track plans around the one town concept. A question, do you really need a passing track or double ending siding if I am looking a twenty minute operating sessions by myself. Maybe some spurs in one direction, some in the other. The northbound would handle some, the southbound the other. I am remembering Tony Koester's article on Wingate in MR Planning years ago.

Jack

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## What goes around, comes around.



Fri, 2018-01-05 08:47 — Grenzer47

lol, in 1959 my first layout was a one-town pike, but the one town was Minneapolis. Of course I was only modeling a few blocks behind my house but I tried to simulate what I saw daily. Due to lack of space it was a shelf type layout with staging at each end as I had no room for a loop. One end represented Southtown Yard which made up trains and the other end was only a runaround siding. All the on-stage action took place at 35th Street yard and it's adjacent industries. At the time it was considered a goofy arrangement for a number of reasons: linear with simple staging ends, urban setting, all switching, no continuous running, modeling such a small area. Little did I realize necessity had put me ahead of the times!

I still enjoy that theme and may just downsize to something like that again, on a larger size, and with provision for continuous running. And I crave some street trackage and a few one car industries based on local examples. Plus gotta have some local passenger service and a milk train. All very doable.

Barry P.

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## Excellent topic



Fri, 2018-01-05 08:51 — NevinW

My Tonopah and Tidewater RR has three towns, but one is also the staging area and the other is in the immediate area of Goldfield so it almost qualifies as a one town layout. The concept behind it is definitely similar. Would love to see everyone's ideas. I think this is the direction model railroading is headed. More prototypic, more switching oriented and smaller scope.

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## Rich S -- one town layout

Fri, 2018-01-05 09:22 — James Six

Rich,

Your layout is a perfect example of how a one town layout will work in a small space. By the way, the quality of your work is excellent.

You can stage trains on the far side of the layout, run a local train around to the front to switch then town, then when work is complete run the train out of town and back to staging. This is the root of operating a one town layout regardless of size.

Thank you for sharing Rich,

Jim Six





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## What you lose with one station

Fri, 2018-01-05 09:42 — James Six

You are right -- different strokes. I really see not true loss with one station. Read on. 😊

However, . . . folks without the luxury of space, time, and resources are limited and cannot build a larger layout where dispatching is the norm. These are the folks that this blog is about.

The one town layout can have through trains and passenger trains too. You are right that a dispatcher would simply sequence and time these trains. But in a sense, that is what they do on the big layouts too. On my layout we don't use a dispatcher. We incorporate a railroad "Agent" at the depot. The Agent hands out train orders to the incoming crew and most importantly, a switch list for switching the town. He/She also notifies the crew of any changes to the time table so they are not caught blocking the main when a through train arrives. So yes, when serious about an operating session, we operate with TT&TO (time table and train orders).

Jim Six



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Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Princeton, MN

Fri, 2018-01-05 09:45 — captpete

As I mentioned on your other (Depression Era) Blog I model the 32 mile Elk River to Milaca Branchline of the Great Northern in the 20's and 30's. The [raison d'être](#) of the line was the town of Princeton where the town fathers propositioned J. P. Hill for a branch line through the town. It gave them a route from St. Paul to Duluth for the town's businesses and a

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short-cut for the GN. Here's some historical photo's

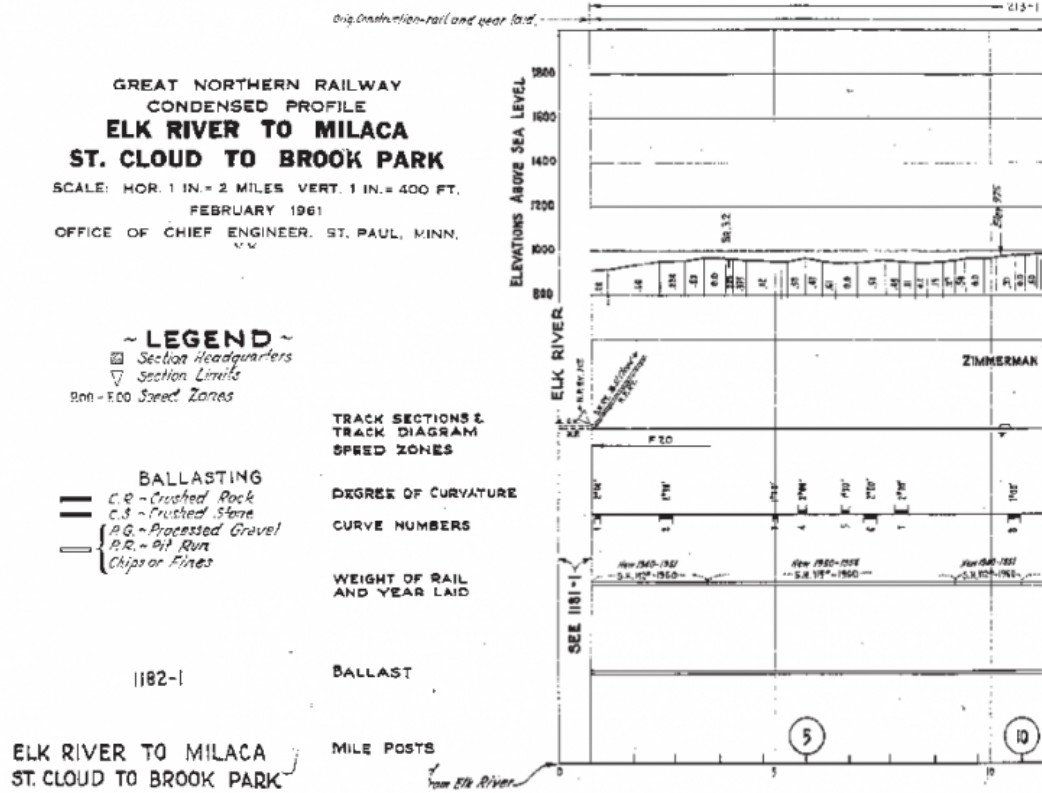


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- A Coupler Lift Bar (Cut Lever) facsimile/analog used for 1 handed uncoupling during operations
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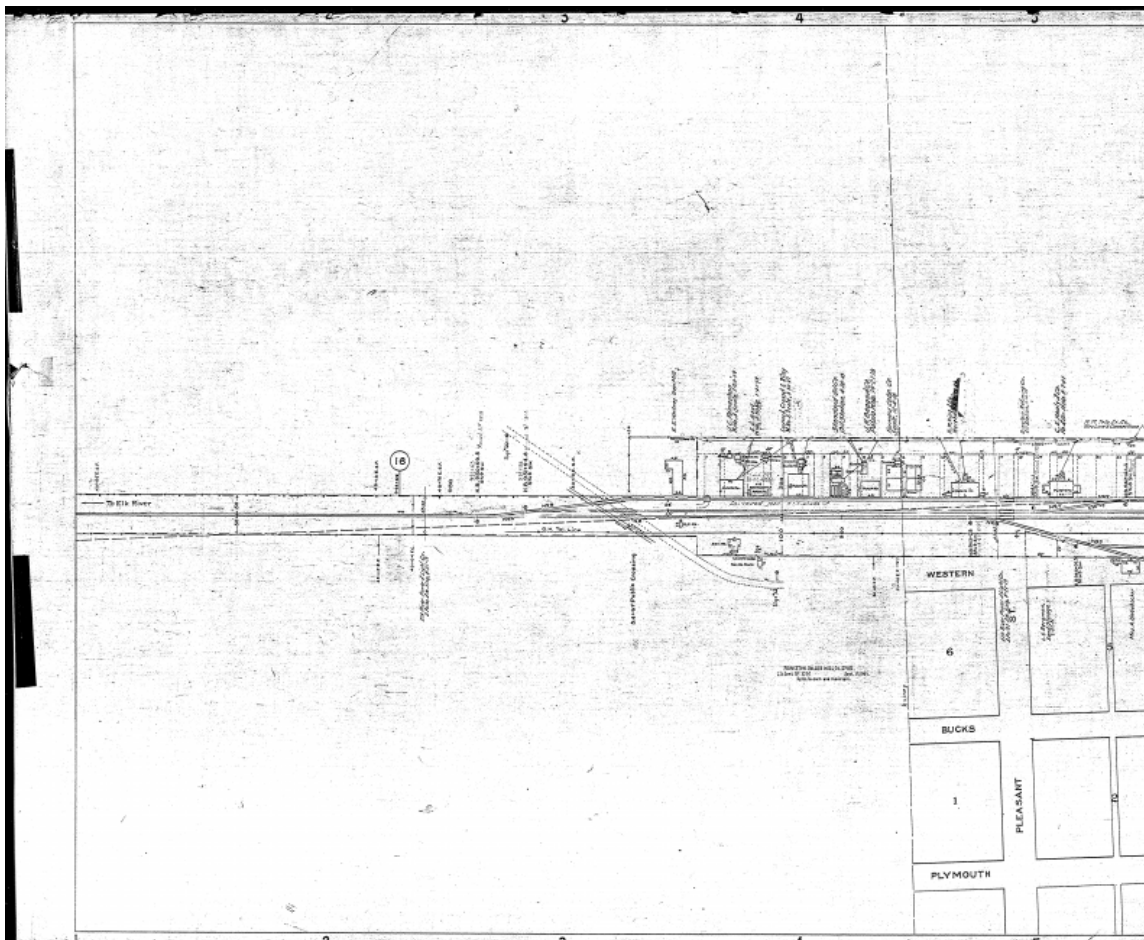
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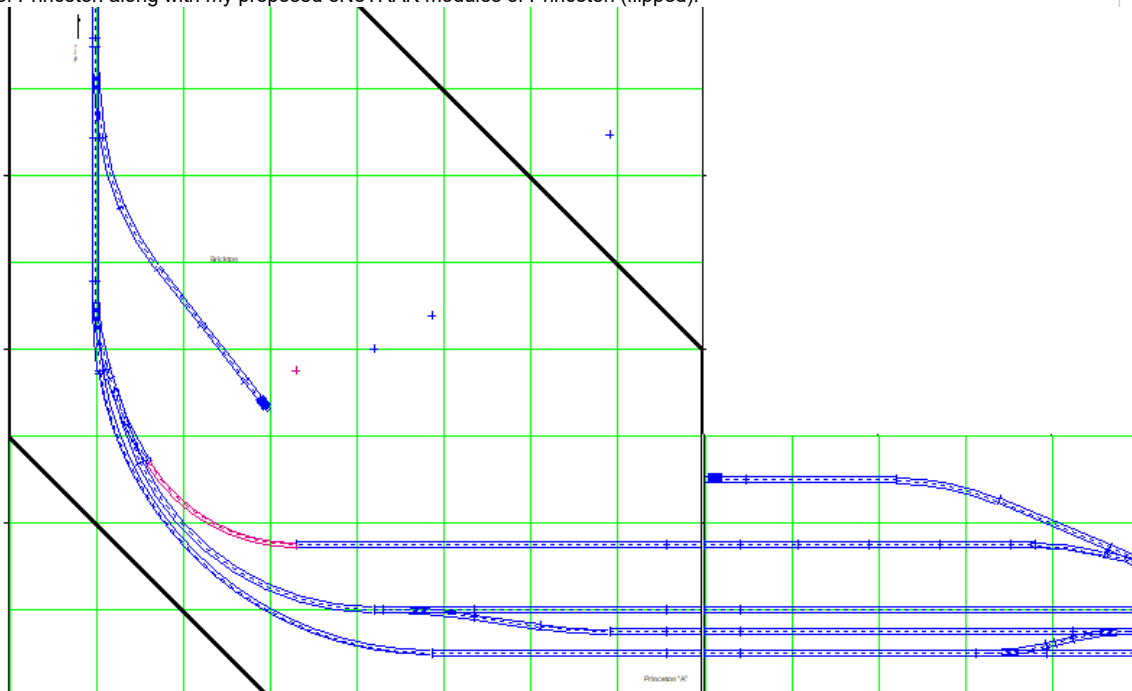
and both a Track Chart



and a Station Plat



of Princeton along with my proposed oNeTRAK modules of Princeton (flipped).



I could also pick Elk River or Milaca of course and I have info on both.

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MannsCreekRR -- I have been operating on

Fri, 2018-01-05 10:06 — James Six

You bring up a lot of the key points needed to make a one-town layout work. First of all, things are slowed way down. In fact, most 1-town layouts operate in "real time" and do NOT use a fast clock. A fast clock would complete ruin the illusion of realism.

On my layout we operate with 2-man crews -- an engineer and a brakeman. The engineer does the obvious, he throttles the locomotive. The brakeman is the best job on the railroad! The brakeman uncouples cars (with a pick), aligns couplers for coupling, operates the ground throws to align switches, and communicates with hand signals or verbally to instruct the engineer when to move, where to move, and how fast to move. All of this takes time. All of this is done at the same pace as it was done on the real railroads. We use the rules of the time that the layout represents. For me, this is the late 1920s to mid 1930s. In other words, the crew does all of the things that the real crewmen did in the time. This is realistic and most importantly GREAT FUN!!! This also means that all of my switches are controlled by manual ground throws. To electrically operate the is very unrealistic and takes away from the experience.

That said, with layouts represent contemporary times, many switches are remotely controlled from some location. I would electrically operate them and have crews "call in" to the operator that controls the switches in question to throw the switch. The train crew only would throw switches that are manually thrown in the real world.

Jim Six



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## I didn't know that Dave.

Fri, 2018-01-05 10:11 — James Six

I didn't know that Dave. Thanks for the info.

Jim 👍

## By the way

Fri, 2018-01-05 05:50 — [dave1905](#)

Railroads don't have "towns". Road maps have towns. Railroads have stations. Just saying.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.



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## One Town reduced to One Spot?

Fri, 2018-01-05 10:15 — Donroback

Great topic! I'm reminded of Andy Sperandio's New Orleans Union Terminal layout shown in his book on passenger ops. He was able to roughly replicate a busy passenger terminal without filling a basement. I'm currently working on a similar concept with the Chicago Union Station: mostly passenger ops at the station with engine facilities and coach yards to make up and break down trains. Most of the layout will be within yard limits with little to no mainline running. Also, as mentioned by somebody else, lots of urban structures to dwarf the trains and hide the entrances and exits.

I'm very interested in other folk's approach to similar scenarios.

Don in Raleigh, NC

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## Jack -- How Much Railroad Do You Need?

Fri, 2018-01-05 10:19 — James Six

Truly great question Jack. I think that this is the single biggest mistake that model railroaders (in general) make. They don't know what they need and buy a lot of things that they really don't need. This is because they have never really defined their goals -- achievable goals, not dream world goals.

The concept of a 1-town layout does not mean that the entire town needs to be modeled. After all, this is a model railroad. We should only model things that the railroad serves and little else, that is, unless your hobby is really modeling cities and towns as is the case with some well-known model railroaders! LOL

My layout "represents" Sturgis MI back in the late 1920s/early 1930s. Sturgis was a decent size city and not really a "town". However, I have not the interest, space, nor the resources to model the city. What I model is there for two purposes. One, support my operating sessions. Two, look pretty to assist realism.

Jim Six

### Modeling the Depression Era in HO-scale



### Modeling 1925 thru 1935



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## British Layouts



Fri, 2018-01-05 10:57 — Brentglen

Interesting discussion, but this is exactly the way people in the UK have been modelling for years. Typically they model a single station, maybe with some freight spurs and then have staging at either end. I believe that some of them even operate to a timetable with trains entering and leaving at designated times.

Brent Ciccone

Calgary

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## The affect of era modeled

Fri, 2018-01-05 11:16 — James Six

There is something that many model railroaders do not consider. They are young and only know what they have seen (grown up with). However, what you grew up with may not be the best reason for selecting a "time" to model.

Today's railroads are only a shadow of their former selves. Most of the branch lines are long gone. Most sidings are long gone. Most customers (served by the railroad) are long gone. In short there is little left to model . . . when compared to times before the 1950s and for sure compared to times before WWII.

If we are to model in a smaller space than that of a dream layout we need to consider what we can model. Yes, there remains things to model. No doubt. But the pickings are slim when compared to the hey days of railroading. On my 1-town layout I have three grain elevators, four coal dealers, three lumber dealers, two bulk oil dealers, a furniture factory, a machine tool factory, three team tracks, a meat packing and a produce canning plant, and biggest of all will be an electric generating plant (power plant) that is coal fired!

This is a lot of on-line customers to be served. How many of them would be to serve if the layout was set in contemporary times? Not much. In short, modeling pre WWII means you can get more in the same space, or you can get the same amount of customers in less space. Hmmm . . .

Another thing to consider is the size of freight cars. Today's cars are 60' and longer. Freight cars of my era were 32' to 40' -- in other words half the size. They take up a lot less space, something critical to modelers who are space challenged. Modeling 1930 compared to year 2000 is like modeling in N-scale compared to HO-scale! I can model smaller industries. No mega industries needed.

Yes, I am being a bit dramatic, but there is a lot of truth to my point. 😊

Another consideration is this. In most all cases it takes only one locomotive to pull a train in the steam era. It takes two, three, or four to pull a train in the diesel era. Most good HO steamers cost between \$200 and \$400. Most good diesels cost \$150 to \$350. So tell me, which costs less, . . . steam or diesel? When I say good, I mean DCC and sound equipped.



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## A lot of the basic principles

Fri, 2018-01-05 11:26 — Douglas Meyer

A lot of the basic principles of the One Town Layout can be applied to larger layouts also. The underlying principle seems to be to squeeze less into any given space. In my case I am modeling in a much larger space than most. But I have a shorter mainline than many layouts much smaller than mine and I cover much less distance on my prototype. But I have dedicated much more space to the handful of locations that I am modeling. So this blog is of use to folks with more space. And I look forward to following it,

-Doug Meyer

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## In addition to what you need

Fri, 2018-01-05 11:31 — Virginian and L...



In addition to what you need think about what you want. I toss out some examples.

Any small to large town east of the OHIO river, will often have a mountain or at least big hill next to the river with a narrow section of flat land. The areas east of the Ohio have been settled for a long time and the towns were going concerns before the railroads. Shipping was handled via the river. So the railroads in many ways had some complex track to get to the industries along the river. So for modeling purposes the aisle can be the river the modeled portion of the bench work the

town and railroad and the mountain ridge the backdrop. The river traffic was huge, in the early part of the century the tonnage on the Monongahela river in Pittsburgh was greater than the tonnage that crossed the Atlantic Ocean between America and Europe.

Towns further into the flatlands from the state of Ohio westward have a different profile. They have flatter more useable areas and were not as developed as the eastern areas when the railroads arrived generally. There are exceptions but in many cases these areas grew with the railroads so the track layout and scenery will be different than places already developed, think of comparing those areas to the 13 original colonies. Jim Six has posted some excellent photos of his layout which illustrate this very well.

What if someone wants to model a chunk of mainline going up a mountain with a helper station. Same principals apply and there are some great layouts already patterned after these items. Some of the layouts are huge but one could model just the grade, the tracks, and the facilities for pushers top and bottom of grades. With DCC reliable pusher operations are possible. Add in the extra sidings for trains to cool their wheels and release as well as set retainers, switch out the helpers, and one could have a real interesting section of main line railroading in a more manageable size. Most of the bench work could be no more than a foot wide with the exception of the areas for turning the helper. Trains would be a bit shorter as grade has a big effect on tonnage even with helpers making shorter more numerous trains the order of the day. Stack the staging tracks and if one wants have a reverse loop or connect end to end with a helix so the trains can be reused easily. Allows smaller roster of equipment. Imagine the early 1900s with the Virginian pushing trains upgrade with massive 2-10-10-2s and 2-8-8-2s on the front as road engines. Or maybe the NYC getting up a grade with H10s and their 2-8-4s is more to your liking. Lots of options that all work out well with the one town concept.

There is also the idea of a freight yard for the layout. The yard could have staging at each end possibly run through staging and trains could arrive and depart and be worked in the yard. Several crews could be kept busy or as few as one. Modeling could be really economized depending on the amount of tracks used as that would really determine what was needed. A long defunct model magazine had an article in it with just this scenario. A club had disbanded and the layout was being removed and this gent kept the yard of the club layout. He had lots of operating fun switching cars and building trains and changing motive power. It also was such that the models were operated very slowly and really displayed well for viewing by the folks running the layout.

If you were going to partake of this concept what things would you choose to model in the one town concept, what appeals to you as a model railroader? I suspect there are lots of folks interested in your likes and dislikes and how you would approach building something to suit yourself.

Rob in Texas

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

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

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## Mann's Creek?

Fri, 2018-01-05 11:32 — Douglas Meyer

Jim,

Do you know someone modeling Mann's Creek? It is the railroad I would most likely model if I have to start over. And in fact I will have Sewell, but not much of the actual Mann's Creek on my current layout.

-Doug Meyer

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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Sturgis Track Plan

Fri, 2018-01-05 11:46 — JackM

Jim,

In the photographs you have posted it is impressive it does not look pushed together, excellent spacing. Yet somehow you got all those industries in as I remember 24 feet. Not on your list is the engine facility which also takes space. A view of your track plan would be interesting, I assume it has changed materially from what was in the MR planning magazine of several years ago.

Jack

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### TT&TO

Fri, 2018-01-05 11:48 — dave1905

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With one station, the train orders will just be a piece of paper they hold onto (unless you originate trains there) in the vast majority of cases. Dispatchers were supposed to avoid giving train orders to trains at the location where they were restricted. The majority of the orders would be for places other than the station you are modeling. If the train is a through train then won't get "changes to the timetable" at an intermediate station, they would have received those at origin. If the train getting the orders was an extra and it got a meet with train that was an opposing extra, then that opposing extra would pretty much have to be at origin. Any other orders an extra got regarding other extras already on line would have to be a modification of orders they already had. Adding to or removing existing rights or superseding a previous meet. If its a switch engine at the station, then they probably wouldn't get the train orders, the yardmaster or agent would get the train orders, and probably then, only orders annulling regular trains. or announcing a new timetable.

On the up side, if you did restrict them at the location where the orders were delivered it would usually be with a form 31 order that would require the orders to be signed by the train crew before they could be delivered to the other train.

Extra 1234 W is running A to Z. You model M. Dispatcher has a meet set for P with X4321E. Since agent tells dispatcher that X1234W has work at M, dispatcher decides to change meet to M and have X1234W clear for X4321E. Here's why doing that is discouraged. X1234W arrives M and doesn't know about the new orders. X1234W comes down the main since they don't know they are supposed to clear. The engine could go past the signal to the west end of the siding and start its work, while the conductor walked up to the depot to get the orders. A "stop" train order signal isn't a "stop" signal, its a "pick up orders" signal, so as long as the train gets orders or a clearance before they depart the station, they are good.

If the new orders were delivered to X4321E before the dispatcher knew that X1234W had its copies and could comply, the X4321E could be approaching M at speed, expecting to go down the main, only to find the X1234W crew switching on the main at the west end. To avoid those situations the orders should be issued before the X1234W gets to M and then the dispatcher knows there won't be a conflict with the two trains at M.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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- [Scenic Sub Project Update 3 - Staging Yard Details & Planning](#)
- [Ideas for a potential layout... \(Yes again I know\)](#)
- [Another weathering project completed!](#)

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## Great Topic & A Few Examples

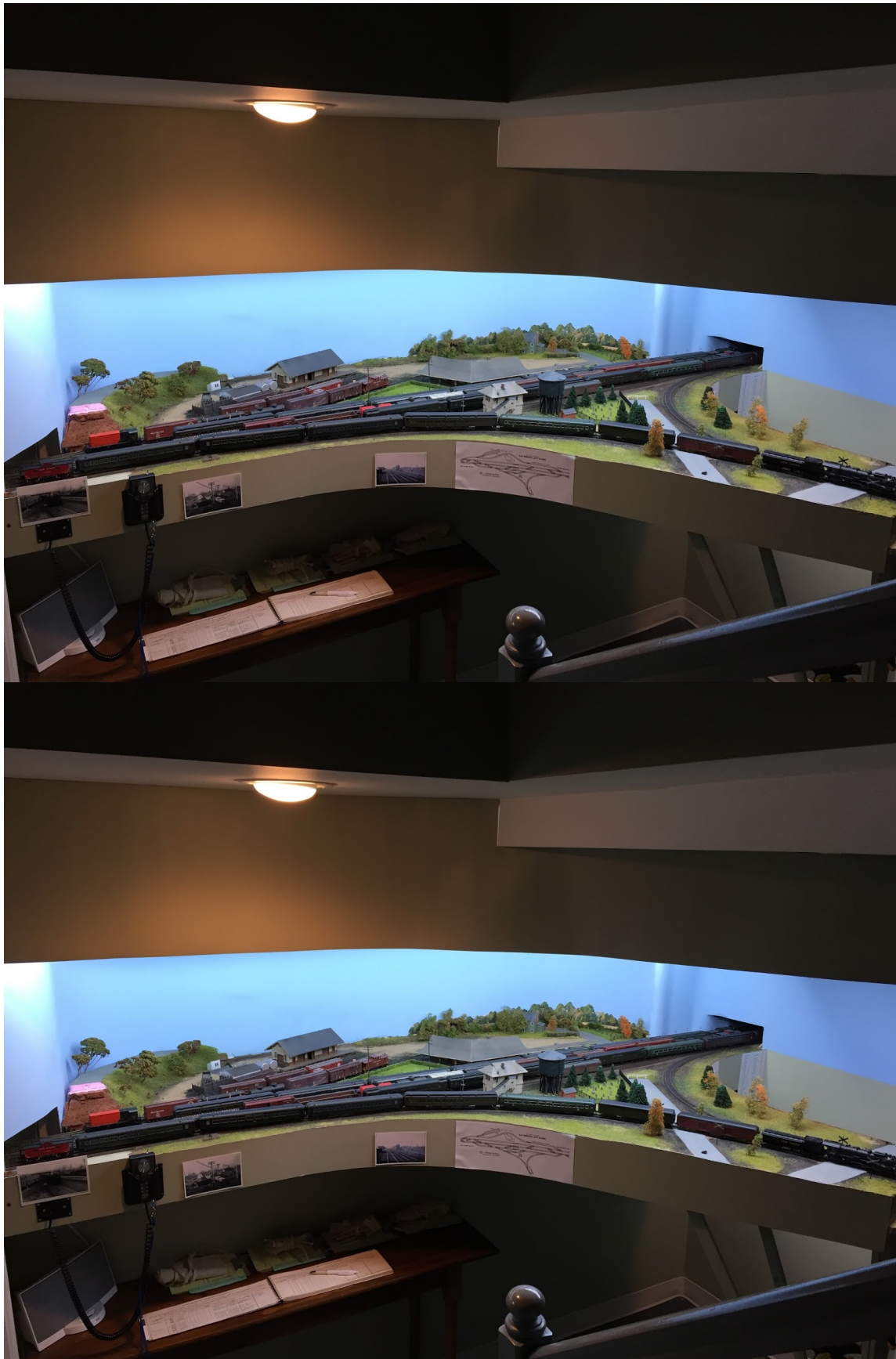
Fri, 2018-01-05 12:23 — Chris Adams

Really enjoying this topic and look forward to following your efforts Jim!

I'm a little biased in favor of this approach as well, since a good friend of mine has done a one-town layout representing New Britain, CT which was an important manufacturing city in its heyday. There's staging off each end, located underneath the town on a lower deck to save space and joined to the modeled portion by a helix at each end(!) [Click here for his website containing all the particulars](#) (and Dave will be happy to see that Randy correctly refers to the town as a "station" :^)

Brent said what I was going to say about British layouts - typically one station with a staging/fiddle yard off one (or both) ends. And that's essentially what I have on my layout at Old Saybrook, CT (though, admittedly, I do have a lot more layout than this, but discovered I didn't **have** to):





A 9-foot long scene, including a portion of the New Haven Railroad's famed double-track Shore Line between New York and Boston, with a wye up the Valley Branch. I discovered pretty quickly that, with staging & a loop off each end (this portion of the layout is essentially a dogbone), I could run all 33(!) mainline trains that the prototype ran during the 12 hour period I model - at the actual times using the actual employee timetable. I only use a fast clock (4:1) to reduce the session time to a reasonable 3hrs. Two local freights (one westbound & one eastbound) serve the town. Even though I have two branchlines which are the main focus of the layout, I could be happy with just Old Saybrook alone. [Click here for more.](#)

Finally, the last example is actually one of my first passions: the Jefferson, Memphis & Northern - one of the layouts featured in one of the first model railroad books I ever purchased ("Track Planning Ideas from Model Railroader" - I think it was also in the October 1979 issue of MR). It was a fictional line set on a 5x9' table with a loop of track that had a small town on one side of the table and a rural scene/passing track on the other side. Operations would entail using that passing track on the back side as "staging" and trains would come from the back of the layout to the town in front, switch industries, and continue on "to the next town" (back into staging).

Realizing how much fun & operation could be had with something so small was really inspirational to me - and certainly underscores the wisdom of the one-town approach.

Chris

[The Valley Local](#)

*Modeling the New Haven Railroad's Connecticut Valley Line, October 1948*

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## What to do when seriously space challenged? Solution-1.

Fri, 2018-01-05 12:26 — James Six

### SOLUTION-1

For the seriously space challenged people in our hobby, and I have to believe this is most of us, How does one design and operate such a small layout? This is a HUGE question.

I see this as being very doable. I will start by commenting on "staging yards". They are not necessary and in some cases they are overrated. In fact, with a one-town layout they are not even necessary. How so? The simplest type of one-town layout is point-to-point. That is, from one end of town to the other, or even less. How to we operate such a layout?

The operational focus is switching the local customers that you have modeled in the town. This can be done with a local switcher or with a local train. In the case of the local switcher, when you start operation cars have already been set out on a siding(s) by trains that passed through town (imaginary) before you start operating. There are also cars at customer sidings that will have to be picked up or moved and re-spotted.

The station agent hands you (real or imagined) your train orders and switch list. You go about your work switching the town and setting our cars on a siding for through trains (imaginary) to pick up after your work is complete. In fact, this is the way I most often operate my layout. I do it alone or with one other operator so I can have a 2-man crew. In other words you don't even need to actually model a train to bring cars to town and take out cars. The train is modeled in your imagination!

A variation of SOLUTION-1 is to have the local train already arrived in town. The locomotive is sitting at the station. you pick up your orders and proceed as above. When your work is complete your train is ready to leave. Operating session complete! In your imagination the train leaves town after your operating session is complete.

No staging yard is required for either of these scenarios. You can devote all of your available space to modeling the town, No need to sacrifice space for staging! Talk about efficient.

Jim Six



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## Dave -- you just got elected!

Fri, 2018-01-05 12:29 — James Six

Dave,

You have been elected to help us work this out in a way that will work for one-town operation.

Jim 😊



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## Space challenged

Fri, 2018-01-05 13:23 — Wabash Banks

I am very space challenged. The space in the basement for the eventual layout isn't finished and won't be for a couple of years yet. To get around it I am doing my layout as a folding model in ironing board fashion. I want something I can take to

shows as well as kept dust free, as much as humanly possible anyway. My house is done in a primitives style so an old wood exterior will house the layout and I plan to make the cabinet appear to be an old style building with the name of the railroad and its setting date painted on like you see on old buildings. It i will have a cornice and some corbels added to complete the effect. When stored it will take up about 15X15X4.5 with the 4.5 being verticle.

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## Congratulations on starting an MRH blog

Fri, 2018-01-05 13:45 — joef

Jim, congrats on starting an MRH blog! We have given you a custom blog URL that's easy to reference.

When you want to tell others (like Yahoo group members) to visit your blog, just say:

<http://mrhmag.com/blog/jamessix>

Enjoy!

**Joe Fugate**

Publisher, Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine



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## Jim

Fri, 2018-01-05 14:03 — Jackh

If you can prove that staging yards are not necessary and it catches on for us small layout builders, Tony K may throw a fit!!! 😊 All joking aside, I don't have one either and my wife told me that I can't have any of her space either to add one.

I did want to point out a long running series of articles in RMC back in the 2000's I believe. The author collected old post cards and a lot of them showed small towns mostly in the Midwest and their industries.

Coal yards, oil depots, lumber dealers, farm equipment dealers, grain dealers/silos, stock yards/butchers, creameries, ice houses, general stores, plus others I don't remember at the moment.

Jim is also right about the size of industries and the freight cars that served them. Most of us grew up with the growth of the interstate highway system or came along long after it got built. It was started in the 2nd half of the 50's and before that long distant trucking wasn't very plentiful. It was faster and cheaper to ship by rail.

Talking about operation, something I have wondered about with LCL freight. Did RR's every put more then one companies freight in the same box car? If so how was it separated and secured?

Really interesting conversation, Jack

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## Talking about operation,

Fri, 2018-01-05 14:10 — Virginian and L...

Talking about operation, something I have wondered about with LCL freight. Did RR's every put more then one companies freight in the same box car? If so how was it separated and secured?

Many times the lcl shipment would arrive at a freight house and be loaded up with other lcl freight going to another freight house that would get local delivery. In some cases the destination would require an intermediate stop where it was sorted and reloaded to another freight house. In other cases the shipment would change railroads before reaching the final destination.



To put it in perspective think ups with box cars instead of brown trucks and planes.

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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## No staging

Fri, 2018-01-05 14:51 — dave1905

A variation of SOLUTION-1 is to have the local train already arrived in town. The locomotive is sitting at the station. you pick up your orders and proceed as above. When your work is complete your train is ready to leave. Operating session complete! In your imagination the train leaves town after your operating session is complete.

No staging yard is required for either of these scenarios. You can devote all of your available space to modeling the town, No need to sacrifice space for staging! Talk about efficient.

You have staging, its just not connected to the layout, you have to 0-5-0 the cars (and/or engines) between the layout and the "staging". Unless of course you are going spot, pull, respot, repull, respot, etc. the same cars every time. Not having the staging also solves the TT&TO question making it totally unnecessary because you can't have any other trains. If your train is the only train that will every be on the layout, then you don't really need to worry about other trains.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

- [Layout design](#)

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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

### LCL

Fri, 2018-01-05 15:22 — dave1905

Talking about operation, something I have wondered about with LCL freight. Did RR's every put more then one companies freight in the same box car? If so how was it separated and secured?

Yes, pretty much by definition there will be more than one shipment in a car, its Less than Car Load. If you just have one shipment in a car, then pretty much you have a car load.

Railroad LCL was NOT spotted at customers. It went to freight houses and unloaded into the freight house. Then customers would come pick it up or the railroad would deliver it to the customer, but the freight was secured in the freight house and was in charge of the agent.

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Railroads had a network of hubs (in major cities) where LCL was collected, sorted and then distributed to the next hub. LCL for other railroads was routed to a hub that interchanged with the other railroad, that hub would put the LCL for the other railroad in a car that would be interchanged to the other railroad, then that railroad would take it to their hub where it would be sorted again and routed to another hub until it was sent to the closest freight house to where it was going. An LCL shipment might travel in a dozen boxcars going coast to coast.

I work in the Navy yard at San Diego. My brother-in-law is building a PT boat on the Missouri River near Dupo, IL, just south of St Louis. Once a month I ship a piece of PT boat to my brother-in-law. I drive it down to the ATSF freight house in San Diego. They load it into a boxcar with 15 tons of other shipments and send it to Los Angeles. It's spotted at the freight house in LA, they unload it, sort it, and put it in a boxcar going to Kansas City along with 25 tons of other shipments. The ATSF hauls it to Kansas City. They spot it at the freight house, it's unloaded, sorted and put into a boxcar going to the MP along with 8 tons of other shipments. The boxcar is interchanged to the MP. The MP takes it to the freight house, unloads the car, sorts the shipments, reloads it into a boxcar going to St Louis along with 20 tons of other shipments. At St Louis it's spotted at the freight house, sorted and reloaded into a boxcar going to Dupo along with 3 tons of other shipments. The boxcar is pulled and sent to Dupo, it's spotted, unloaded into the freight house. The agent at Dupo notifies my brother-in-law and he drives down in his Dodge Power Wagon to pick it up. One shipment, five boxcars.

There are also third party LCL companies, think a UPS trailer on a flatcar. The railroad's customer is the 3rd party company, the 3rd party company's customers are all the individual shipment shippers. The railroad doesn't handle the car like LCL, it handles it like a car of mixed freight. In that case the railroad spots an empty at the 3rd party's facility, they load it, it's shipped as a car of mixed freight to the 3rd party's destination warehouse, the 3rd party unloads it and they are responsible for the delivery. The railroad's involvement ends when they spot the car. REA worked like that. REA solicited the shipments, REA loaded the shipments, the railroad provided the transportation, and REA handled the delivery. Just like with UPS, if you ship a package with UPS, you don't know whether it went by air, rail or truck, your only contact is with UPS.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## No Staging-You can't do THAT

Fri, 2018-01-05 15:20 — JackM

No staging solves sooooo many problems for me. Do I have the courage to take it that far? Thinking about it.

Jack

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## One Town Layouts

Fri, 2018-01-05 16:26 — Lner1922

As a European I have found this thread fascinating. Over here we do not have basements and our houses are generally smaller. Space is at a premium so One Town Layouts are the norm. My ATSF layout in N scale is in an attic and is 20 feet long 9 feet wide. Down one side is a depiction of a medium sized town situated on a Santa Fe secondary main. The town has a 2 track station, freight house, team track and 10 spurs serving various industries. It also has a small 4 track yard for sorting cars. On the opposite side of the attic is a 10 track fiddle yard representing the rest of the world.

Through freights and way freights originate in the fiddle yard and operate on a sequence timetable. The through freights drop off and pick up cars whilst switching is done by the way freights. Passenger trains simply stop and then proceed back to the fiddle yard. I use 4 cycle waybills made using the Shenendoah Waybill programme with car cards I make myself.

The layout is uncluttered and I use number 6 turnouts on the main with number 4 on spurs. There are no tracks crossing under, over or on the level and I believe the optic effect is to give a more realistic feel of a small town. As I live in a rural part of Ireland there are very few other modellers in my area and they all do European layouts so of necessity I am a one man band.

A well planned layout like this can give hours of enjoyment and using the 4 cycle waybill ensures that different cars appear on almost every operating session. Tonight I spent 2 hours switching the cars left by through freights arriving between midnight and midday and which arrived on 2 way freights. Sometimes I just run the trains around the layout which can be quite relaxing. For me the one town concept definitely works.

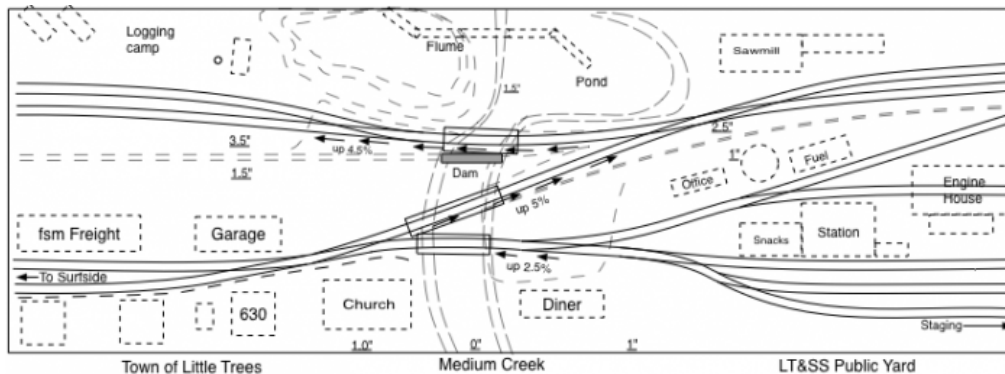
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## One town...



Fri, 2018-01-05 17:13 — Pelsea

I can attest that a one town layout can be satisfying to build and operate. I am approximately half done building this version of the Little Trees and Surfside:



I've been at it for four years, but nothing like full time. The time I have spent has been leisurely, working slowly and redoing most things two or three times. The track is nearly bulletproof-- I only have some grade transitions to clean up. (But there's no ballast yet.) I have most of the indicated structures in place. I think I'm getting fairly good at building structures, but a couple of my early items are slated for the chainsaw. There's no scenery yet, but with two climate zones, lots of visible rock and plenty of water to model, I think I'll have to confront most of the classic problems.

I'm not really an ops guy, but I've worked out several jobs. These are not very complicated, and can only include three cars, but they keep me entertained for the occasional session.



It's true there is only one town, but there are four visual/operational zones. The town proper is front left. I'm modeling the cheap end of some residential streets and a couple of buildings served by the railroad. Note the elevation change. This will be masked by fences and brush, but allow the trains to be seen behind the buildings. The photo is from the operator's seated point of view. (The layout is low to accommodate a sloped ceiling.)

The base operation is spotting cars at the freight station, which is made complicated by the fact they need to be pushed into place. The only run around is to the right on the staging shelf, so when a through freight leaves a car for the locals a fair amount of shuffling is required to get it to the dock.



The tourist operation is across the creek to the right. The yard tracks extend a further four feet along a shelf, so there is room for switching my minuscule fleet of cars. The steamers are housed and displayed at the engine house, and excursion trains are assembled at the station. When the diesel is needed, I five finger spot it at the end of staging, assuming a facility out there somewhere.

The upper areas represent areas deep in the woods. That fiction is visually indicated by different elevations and distinctive coloration of the walls at the separation. When I get to scenery, there will also be a difference in trees. Operational separation is provided by a switchback that takes a while to negotiate. Up left will be the logging camp, which doubles as a picnic destination for excursions:



(The red sawmill will go away-- this area will include a cookhouse, bunk buildings and a spar tree). This will be a demonstration logging camp, but will generate revenue from cut logs. It is the destination for excursions, which just park a while on the near track. One job is to load logs onto 3 skeleton cars and move them to the sawmill downhill. The cars have to be brought from staging, and these moves need to fit around the excursions.



The mill is on the second switchback, an intermediate level on the right. This is half the elevation of the camp, and will be further demarcated by vegetation along the cliff edge. This building is a keeper, but will need lots of logging details, including a pond. Logs from the camp will be dumped into the pond, and the skeletons returned to staging. The mill will produce rough cut bunks, to be loaded onto flat(s) and moved to staging. There is room in the back corner for a possible shingle mill, which will give me a second spot. There are two tracks here to switch spots, but one has to be left clear for the excursion.

I guess I think of the layout as a platform stage set, with everything always visible to the audience, but attention is directed to the action. (I do some lighting too-- nothing fancy, just a couple of gooseneck lamps at the ends that I focus on the area I am working on or operating.) Transitions are important in staging-- here each transition involves crossing a bridge. With this and the switchback, I really do feel like the trains are going somewhere, even though the trips are measurable in feet.

I figure this one little town will keep me busy for at least four more years, By then I'll have solved the space problem, and will add a second town-- Surfside.

pqe

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## Modern "one town"

Fri, 2018-01-05 17:16 — sailormatlac



Jim, if going modern, one has to think in term of maybe "one industry" or "one part of an industrial park" just like Lance Mindheim promoted a few years ago (even even got down to the one turnout layout, which I tried and worked surprisingly nicely). On my club layout, we ended up simply modelling two "towns", on in each room. It is basically similar to your Sturgis layout except you have one large industry instead of a collection of smaller ones. The choice of industry must take in account a credible amount of traffic. In our case, we elected to model a large cement plant without compressing the rail-served part (coal, gypsum, bulk cement, bagged cement) and a paper mill. 50ft cars are the norm and we only use one or two switchers. The layout is generally operated just like a switching layout and a freight train pick up and set out cars at both industries sidings.

You are right about steam locomotives. And when we model small town or local switcher, we don't have to buy a lot of locomotives since they were generally assigned to a specific line back then, creating a sense of familiarity. It does happen nowadays with some shortlines, but that's another thing.

BTW, all this discussion reminds me of an old article in MR back in the 70s about Fox Lake. It was a small town which station was located on a returning loop back to a wye connection with the main line. This could be set as a peninsula in a small room with staging (if required) along one wall (or two).

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>  
Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>

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Fri, 2018-01-05 18:30 — Jackh

Thanks for clearing up the LCL with added details. Makes more sense now.

Jack

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Fri, 2018-01-05 19:26 — dave1905

You have been elected to help us work this out in a way that will work for one-town operation.

Not hard at all.

Since its TT&TO first you need a timetable and list the regular trains in the timetable. Then you need a clock to measure time.

Use a spreadsheet program. List the trains that are going to run during the session. Show the schedule time of the regular trains and the ETA, the time you actually plan to run them into your session. Note whether they will be on time or late. Regular trains can't be early and extras don't have a scheduled time so can't be either early or late. The in the rows below decide what orders you need and who gets them.

I faked in some trains and times for a first shift operation, the WWD local X3456W, arrives first and switches the industries and departs, then later that shift the EWD arrives, switches and departs later. Assume EWD is the superior direction.

[illegible]

Go through all the trains decide what orders will be needed.

No 5 is a first class train in the superior direction and is almost on time, no orders needed.

No 571 is running over an hour late so that may need us to do something. Its a EWD 2nd class train so first class trains and EWD trains don't care. That means the WWD 2nd class and extras would need something.

X1234E, being an extra needs something on each of the opposing extras.

X2345E, being an extra needs something on each of the opposing extras.

No 6 is on time, so nothing is needed for it.

No 472 is 25" late, but its a 2nd class train in the inferior direction so its not late enough to be a problem so it doesn't need anything else.

X3456W being an extra needs something on each of the opposing extras.

X4567W being an extra needs something on each of the opposing extras.

1		EWD Superior					WWD			
2	Train	No 5	No 571	X1234E	X 2345E		No 6	No 472	X3456W	X4567W
3	Type	1st	2nd	Thru	Local		1st	2nd	Local	Thru
4	Originate	900a	900a	600a	700a		830a	900a	530a	1100a
5	Sched	1120a	125p				1050a	1150a		
6	ETA	1125a	245p	930a	1245p		1050a	1215p	730a	203p
7	Late	5"	1'20"				OT	25"		
8	No 571 Late		x					x	x	x
9	X1E meet X3W			x					x	
10	X1E meet X4W			x						x
11	X2E meet X3W				x				x	
12	X2E meet X4W				x					x
13										
14										
15										
16										

Those are all the orders needed by the trains that would run during the session. Then you would have to look at when the trains originate. No 571 and X4567W will originate after the start of the session (700am). That means that the orders covering lines 9 and 11 have to be issued before the session starts and lines 8, 10 and 12 will have to be issued during the session.

But which ones might be delivered at the station you modeled?

When No 571 originates it will be at origin, No 472 will be at origin (or just out) and X4567W originates after No 571 so all of those trains would receive their order about No 571 someplace else, either at origin or soon after. Only X3456W would get the order at your station because its there doing station switching when order was issued.

When X4567W originates the two EWD extras will have to get something on it. X1234E will be by your station and X2345E will have to get the order before it get to your station when X4567W originates at 1100am. X4567W will have to get its orders on the two EWD extras at origin.

1		EWD Superior				WWD				
2	Train	No 5	No 571	X1234E	X 2345E		No 6	No 472	X3456W	X4567W
3	Type	1st	2nd	Thru	Local		1st	2nd	Local	Thru
4	Originate	900a	900a	600a	700a		830a	900a	530a	1100a
5	Sched	1120a	125p				1050a	1150a		
6	ETA	1125a	245p	930a	1245p		1050a	1215p	730a	203p
7	Late	5"	1'20"				OT	25"		
8	No 571 Late		x					x	x	x
9	X1E meet X3W			x					x	
10	X1E meet X4W			x						x
11	X2E meet X3W				x				x	
12	X2E meet X4W				x					x
13										
14										
15										
16										

Only one order, the one dealing with No 571 late and delivered to X3456W, will happen at your station during the session. All the other orders will be delivered other places.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## TT&TO

Fri, 2018-01-05 20:13 — James Six

thanks Dave. Looks simple enough but I need to study it more.

Thanks again,

Jim Six



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## Matt, that article was about

Fri, 2018-01-05 20:15 — BOK

Matt, that article was about the Milwaukee Road's Fox Lake branch which extended from a wye off the Horicon-Portage secondary line 1 and 3/4 miles up to the town of Fox Lake, Wi..In all, I believe there were about a dozen turnouts and while the main industry was a Vegetable canning plant, there was also a feedmill, a lumber yard and a couple of bulk oil distributors all with the exception of the feed mill, located in the middle of the balloon (loop) track. truly, a railroad you could model. Just east of there at Beaver Dam there was also a similar wye-balloon track branch with several down town industries which was modelable.

Fast forward to today. The wye leading up to Fox Lake is still in operation with a mile off the north stem used for car storage and operated by Wisconsin Southern. When the canning plant closed sometime in the 80/90s that was about all the only, rail served customer left, so the balloon track, spurs and a portion of "main" line down to the wye were removed.

Somewhere, I have sketches of the tracks/industries from a local Wisconsin modeler but not sure where they are.

Barry

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## Dave dude....

Fri, 2018-01-05 21:32 — Wabash Banks

that is a giant bunch of gibberish!! I mean I can see that it is clearly laid out and should be intelligible but I don't get it. Got a link for someplace I can go get schooled on TT&TO? What era's was this used in?

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### A train leaves

Fri, 2018-01-05 21:43 — dave1905

Probably should have paid closer attention to those, "A train leave Chicago at 3 o'clock ..." word problems in elementary school.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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### I taught timetable/train

Fri, 2018-01-05 22:18 — BOK

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I taught timetable/train orders as a rules/safety many years ago on the Soo Line and it was not a simple concept to grasp for new hires...and experienced men didn't completely, understand them either. This was back in the 70s.

All of us, in the railroad industry, breathed a contented, sign of relief when train orders were replaced by simple Track Warrants in the 80s and I would venture a guess that TWs are a lot easier to understand and use than either timetables/train orders.

I have been asked to teach modelers the concepts of authority on the main track, definition of a main, timetables, train orders and other out dated forms of authority ...but to me it isn't worth the time and trouble to do so, particularly on small railroads. This may sound cruel but we railroaders were thrilled to see the old authorities go away and be replaced by something simple and I don't understand the need to confuse modelers either. Some folks do enjoy the option of understanding how these older concepts work and apply to small railroads. For my small, simple version of railroading I'll stick with yard limits and track warrants for authority on the main track.

Barry

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## TT&TO is great for small railroads

Sat, 2018-01-06 06:50 — Sn2modeler

I agree with Barry, that for the prototype railroads, getting rid of TT&TO was probably a god send. However, all the reasons for getting rid of TT&TO on the prototype make it great fun on a Model Railroad (for me). I'm not alone, as I dispatcher a large N-scale TT&TO layout that employs 16 people...This month the owner had to close the session as more than 16 wanted to participate. 4 of us are now signed up to be dedicated dispatcher on a rotation, and we will take up the operator positions in one of our off operating sessions.

Another friend has a smaller TT&TO layout just a 4 stations and 90' mainline. That employed 5-6 people and we had no problem getting crews for that too. Dispatching was simple and great learning as was the learning.

To me, small railroad are great experience to learning the principals of TT&TO operation....Actually, now that I'm proficient on TT&TO operations, I struggle with layouts that operate on sequence. If I'm working on a layout that runs on a sequence...and I'm in yard limits, how do I know when the next first class train will come through and that I should clear the main. Will that train be coming in 2 minutes, 8 minutes, 20 minutes or did it get annulled. As a crew I simply cannot make good railroad decisions I have to ask the layout owner...Hey...can I do this? can I do that? can I do YYY? Additionally, I know when the next freight is do in, so I can optimize my work and make sure I have the cars ready for it to pick up and I know when the yard will get full. These same questions apply to crews out on the road. With a clock and schedule and I can make railroading decisions.... That is my beef with sequences...I will acknowledge that TWC, CTC or other means do resolve some of the of the problems, but without a clock, the yard guys can be lost an the true timing of what to do.....Now, to get up on my soap box...The clock does not rush operators....Trains can be late....It is a self inflicted pain...get over it...railroading is messy, its not perfectly on time, the clock is a guide....It is people who get nervous about the clock, because they can not let go...that late is OK...Fast clock are even OK....the do not change how fast our model trains go....stepping down...now...

Back on subject of small layouts and TT&TO. First of all, I would like to say that Dave H does a great job of explaining TT&TO. The first TT&TO post was spot on and a good read for anyone wanting to dispatch a TT&TO layout, I've saved it for a future reference to teach the dispatchers on my friends layout.

Let me contribute to saying a one town layout can could be TT&TO and not run a single train! It need not have any staggig. The trains could be imaginary. The town could be operated by a single switcher. A clock would be used and the the switcher would clear the main (avoid using the main) when trains were scheduled to come through. Simply clearing the main for X minutes. The operator could roll dice to decide if the trains was late, multiple the value by Y minutes to determine how late. If there is a meet in town the switcher would have to clear the siding too. If the train is to drop off cars, they could be rolled off a cassett...

One of these one town layouts would be a great way to teach a crew how to operate on a more complicated TT&TO layout. The crew could operate on this small layout before going out to operate on a larger layout. If more small layouts employed TT&TO, than crews would be educated in TT&TO basics....So out with the Sequences and in with TT&TO! or TWC or some other prototype operating scheme!

David Keith (A TT&TO HACK DISPATCHER)

Having fun with TT&TO on the BORRCS

<http://www.borracs.wordpress.org>

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## TT&TO info

Sat, 2018-01-06 07:39 — dave1905

Operations Special Interest Group NMRA : Lots of info on a whole bunch of subjects

<http://www.opsig.org/reso/>

They have published two books: <http://www.opsig.org/reso/books.shtml>

"19 East Copy 3" : a book specifically on TT&TO operations

"A Compendium of Model Railroad Operations - From Design to Operations" : The whole enchilada

There are books designed for the prototype :

"Rights of Trains" by Josserand : Not for the faint hearted or the novice. If you don't understand TT&TO this will only confuse you.

And last but not least, a rule book for the railroad in which you are interested for the era in which you are interested. One comment about the rule book and Josserand. A lot of railroad rules only make sense if you understand the context. If you don't understand the situation they are addressing and the fundamental rules that underlie the rule being considered, then figuring out what is going on will be difficult.

What most people also don't understand is that EVERYBODY modeling a US railroad before 1985 is modeling a TT&TO layout. Even if you have CTC, the TT&TO rules are lying underneath there and do affect what is happening. Even in CTC, trains got train orders, trains had to have clearances. As one rules examiner told me, "When the asked what rules apply, the answer is they all do."

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## Sturgis is Getting Some Play These Days

Sat, 2018-01-06 07:44 — Yoda

I love it...the old GR&I and the NYC "Old Road" through Sturgis are still in use (three days a week) by the Michigan Southern, which is what I'm modeling in V-Scale and just started blogging about here.

I also love the "One Town" concept. To me, the narrower focus allows for greater attention to a different kind of operational detail than is often seen on division-level layouts. Thirty years ago, I had a small HOn30 shelf layout based on the town of Wiscasset, Maine. There was a surprising amount of operational potential on that little waterfront wharf.

Best Regards,

Kurt "Yoda" Kalbfleisch

Modeling the Michigan Southern in V-Scale

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## Complexity

Sat, 2018-01-06 07:59 — dave1905

The more modern the rule book, the more complex the operation (even with TWC). TT&TO was designed to operate trains where the communication was extremely poor. There was no direct verbal communication between the train crew and anybody (short of walking out the train to talk to the crew or the crew walking into the office) and the only communication

with the dispatcher was by telegraph. Phones were a new fangled invention that happened 40-50 years into TT&TO history. It was designed to be executed by men that had maybe a high school education.

The biggest difference between TT&TO and track warrants is that TT&TO is designed to give a train all the authority at once and then regulate how and when they use it, while TWC gives authority in incremental segments. In my opinion TWC is not an evolution of TT&TO, TWC is actually more of a verbal CTC. If you were to tape the conversations of a "mother may I", verbal authorization, verbal CTC operating session, the conversations would be very close to TWC.

The underlying assumption of TT&TO is that communications will fail at any moment and a train needs all the information to get where its going, even if there is no communication between anything in the field and dispatcher. Mainly because that happened a lot at the beginning. Ice, high winds, rain, termites, wire thieves, bored guys with a 22, all interrupted communications. Modern track authority (CTC, TWC, DTC, Form D, OCS) is based on the assumption we have continuous radio conversation and the most modern systems assume a continuous datastream of information at all times (PTC).

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## Old rules

Sat, 2018-01-06 08:12 — dave1905

Although I model 1900-1905, I generally say I model 1903, that's because in 1903 they had a rule book that approximated a "modern" (1950's) rule book. The rule book in effect in 1900 was so different from a modern rule book that I don't even try to use it. It has 3 or 4 pages of what to do when your train breaks in two, what to do when you find a piece of train standing on the main track with no engine attached, rules requiring that when going around curves the rear brakeman had to use a hand signal to the engine crew to confirm that they were still back there. That was because there weren't universal air brakes, so if a train parted the rear of the train just rolled away, until whatever crew was on the rear portion could set hand brakes and stop it. The only way the head end knew something was wrong was if the train seemed "lighter" or they looked back and part of the train wasn't there. Actually it was very similar to model railroad operation, if a coupler fails a model crew can go a station or two before they notice they are missing the last cars or the train behind them finds their rear end. That was real railroading in the 1800's and early 1900's.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## Your experience(s)

Sat, 2018-01-06 09:54 — James Six

OK, now that we have discussed operation of a one-town layout would anybody tell us about your experiences with designing, building, and then operating it?

Thanks

Jim Six

## Modeling the 1920s and 1930s in HO-Scale



### Modeling Sturgis, Michigan in 1927



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...

Sat, 2018-01-06 09:58 — Benny

A good friend of mine had a Four Car Garage with a One City layout in it. Nice layout, too bad he had to tear it down when he had to move.

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## Big layout

Sat, 2018-01-06 10:05 — Graham Line



I guess our club layout could be considered as a series of one-station layouts -- it's linear, with a long main and two branches, but each station is individually designed. One consists almost solely of a paper mill, one serves a plywood plant and a couple of sawmills etc. Two are intermediate yards.

But each station was established with a consideration of the work that would need to be done and the trackage that would be needed to accomplish the tasks. The length of a runaround and switching leads in the plywood area were measured and tested. I think we used a Brio mockup for that one.

The results have been very pleasing and we haven't needed to make too many adjustments.

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Part of One Town layout

Sat, 2018-01-06 10:38 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

I'm building a "part of one town layout" this being the MILW trackage on Jackson St. in downtown Dubuque, IA. It will have six switches including a lap or 3-way switch. The MILW also had trackage in Washington St. in downtown Dubuque. I really liked John Wright's Federal St. layout which was in the various magazines nearly a decade ago now. I hit the mother lode when I found an HAER study done in Dubuque before construction was begun on a new highway bridge to Wisconsin. While the photos weren't taken by a railfan the street trackage was well recorded in the photos. Today some of the rails remain as the area has been gentrified but most of the industrial buildings remain.

Robert

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### One-town layouts

Sat, 2018-01-06 11:29 — John Colley

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I am in the process of building what is essentially a one town layout which will have staging at each end. I plan on using TT/TO for operations. Basically it is TOMA based, on Mike Confalone's New Sharon Yard, with several nearby industries. There is a long siding and mainline behind the 5 track yard, (west local, east local, west outbound, east outbound, and "for now/runaround"). A typical Operating session will have eastbound or westbound trains come in, based on a schedule, engine(s) go to servicing for at least 15 minutes, while the yard switcher does the block swapping. Then the road engines return from servicing, connect, and depart after brake test is complete and the DS gives a "green". The switcher then takes the inbound cars to the yard for classifying. After classification a local will pull a yard track and switch the industry drops, returning the industry pulls to be sorted east or west outbound. Just before another train is due the outbound cars will be taken to one or the other end of the siding as a block. The modular layout will be approximately 8'x25'. John Colley, Sonoma, CA.

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## "a one town layout can could

Sat, 2018-01-06 11:45 — ctxmf74

*"a one town layout can could be TT&TO and not run a single train! It need not have any staging. The trains could be imaginary. The town could be operated by a single switcher. A clock would be used and the the switcher would clear the main (avoid using the main) when trains were scheduled to come through. Simply clearing the main for X minutes."*

I think the ultimate one town layout would use imaginary TT&TO operations off scene with enough staging so the trains could actually show up and leave town at the appropriate times .It would be what a rail fan at that town would have seen,and probably a more realistic experience than the typical layout with multiple towns spaced around the room less than a train length apart.....DaveB



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## I agree Dave. Not to offend

Sat, 2018-01-06 12:20 — BOK

I agree Dave.

Not to offend my other friend Dave, also a retired railroader, I do believe a simple timetable/train order operation could be set up for a small layout. The town with switching, could be in yard limits so the only thing the switcher/local would need to aware of is when to get in the clear of superior trains, by right, class, or direction. Mainline trains could meet at the town and if required receive orders at the station equipped with a train order signal.

A simple oval layout could have a pair of sidings/staging trackis down in a cut hidden behind trees to hold a couple of freight trains and /or a passenger train which could also meet in the "town" on a siding for a bit of main line activity. Like the poster's original plan with the turntable, the town could be the origin/terminal for the local (which could also be a mixed freight/passenger train with a combine or extra seats in the caboose for a few passengers) and if the wye was used there is the simple staging tracks for off scene, mainline trains.

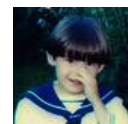
Chris Adams with his great, New Haven layout offers this option in main line activity with his Old Saybrook station, junction and wye feeding his branch line. It provides a nice contrast between a quiet, sleepy branch and a busy, main line junction.

Barry

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## A simple oval

Sat, 2018-01-06 12:49 — sailormatlac



Barry, the way you describe it sounds interesting by keeping things minimal yet quite dynamic for an observer.

Now, I'm thinking as someone who knows most people won't be able to stage various complex meets during a standard solo session. To some extent (if space prevent to implement a decent staging) and depending on what type of operation session one could want (my thoughts are based on the design I recently published here), the staging could indeed be minimal, even inexistent. You stage one mainline train on the opposite side of the oval. The switcher/local does its job and at some point have to clear the mainline so the other train can proceed. This way, you can use the TT/TO system in a minimal but realistic way as a few people already described.

An interesting aspect of staging a meet during a session - including the railfan aspect and realistic thing - is that it can break the intensive work in two halved. Given most switching layouts require to do a runaround move (which real railroads try to minimize) at some point to switch facing sidings, it could be a good time to stage the meet on the mainline. You take a mental break and just look at a nice long freight or passenger train going by, maybe stopping at the station, maybe leaving cars. Then your fictive crew goes back to work, runaround its train and finish the job.

I certainly agree the way you describe staging multiple trains would appeal to many people and can be implemented in small spaces (Mike Hamer's Boston & Maine is a good proof). Then, the goal is to model the traffic. That can be terrific. On the other hands, many are compelled by modelling a job in a town that can be done realistically within more or less a hour... and simply run trains for the heck of it at other time. In that case, elaborate staging isn't required... if someone wants to stage mainline meets, then the pair of sidings your described is the way to go + it would be a neat way to stage a few trains in advance. In that case, I would easily imagine staging the eastbound local and staging the westbound local, thus eliminating the annoying runaround move and better representing how a local would work the line.

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>

Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>

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## Experiences on the LTSS

Sat, 2018-01-06 13:18 — Pelsea



*tell us about your experiences with designing, building, and then operating it?*

Here's a short answer to your query. The long answer is scattered around the forum, as I have documented a lot of it, especially building.

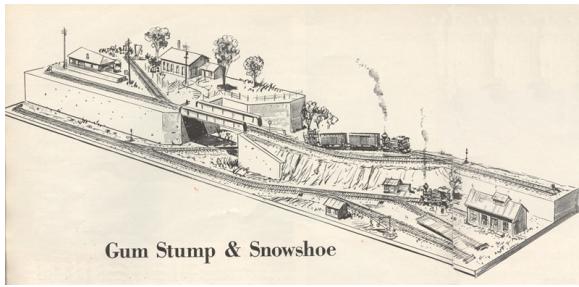
### Design

I had originally designed several options for a larger space that did not turn out to be available for a variety of reasons. During that phase, I learned of and studied most of the standard design books and websites, developing a good idea of what would not work. About the time I realized the footprint would be 3'x7' max (The depth was eventually set at 30" with a 22" reach to the furthest track.) my wife and I began one of our periodic cross country road trips. I packed pencil, eraser, and a pad of quad ruled paper, and spent many evenings in hotel rooms scribbling ideas at 1 inch to the foot.

My prototype inspiration is the local tourist RR, [Roaring Camp & Big Trees](#), which runs narrow gauge Shays up in the virgin redwoods and excursions down to the beach.

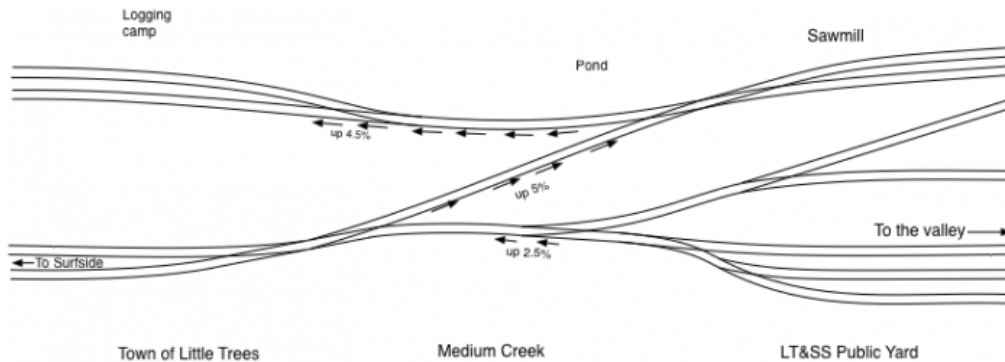


My plan for the large space had been to model the run from the woods to the beach. In the reduced space, I am limited to just the woods. (The beach scene would need a long pier.) I realized that the only way to get any running at all would be to use a switchback, so my "main line" would be a diagonal. After several false starts, I began making variations of the famous Gumstump and Snowshoe:



Gum Stump & Snowshoe

With a lot more depth available than the G&S, I felt I could develop the four stopping points on the switchback into real places. That expanded the lower left and upper right to two tracks, and the lower right to a real yard. I made some measurements and realized that including the iconic underpass would require an extreme grade, so I unwound it:



After more measurements, I came up with a placement of the key turnouts that would allow the maximum train length. That is 27 inches-- I can get four cars up to the top, but only three if I need clearance to the side tracks. (Obviously 80' autoracks are not happening.)

#### Building

Not surprisingly, the benchwork build was quick, only a couple of hours. The bench is 1/4" ply on a poplar 1"x3" frame. The legs are removable, so I can get it out of the room if need be. It is also on castors so I can get at the back with a fair amount of difficulty. The landscape is several layers of pink foam glued to the ply. So far my scenery consists of painting the foam brown and some experiments in treating the level changes. Track is pinned to cork roadbed or directly to the foam. All turnouts are Fast Tracks #4. Building turnouts was a learning opportunity for me, and there are still one or two things to tweak.

#### Operations

My only ops so far have been testing track and trying the jobs I described in an earlier post with various combinations of rolling stock. These have sparked the occasional repositioning of track or buildings to improve clearance. One thing I discovered was the need for an extra two inches on the town tracks, which I was able to provide via a bridge to nowhere:



I also added staging tracks with a runaround on a shelf that extends the yard four feet to the right. I only need a dozen cars, so staging can operate pretty much like a real yard. The runaround gives me options for pushing cars to the town or the logging camp-- I can use two locomotives for the job or run one behind the consist.

This is very much in progress, and I will post developments.

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## My friend has a large

Sat, 2018-01-06 13:46 — JWhite

My friend has a large basement filling one town layout. He models the various junctions, interchanges and yards that were in the East St Louis, Madison, IL area in the late 50s and early 1960s. There is not any real mainline running although the main is set up for continuous running. There is a big IC yard, a small CB&Q yard and a fairly large TRRA yard. And naturally there are a lot of industries that were around the yards. Trains come into the different yards from staging, are broken down and classified, new outbound trains are made up, interchange traffic is moved by the TRRA and both all three modeled railroads switch some of the industries.

My initial plan for my layout was to model Centralia IL to Effingham IL (about 50 miles) in 1955. Operating on my friend's layout, the depression era modeling thread and this blog are making me seriously reconsider that decision. Right now I am building two modules that model the IC freight house in Centralia and the industries around it. So a big design change isn't going to cost me anything in the way of time or money. I'm considering using the 30x40 foot space I have to just model Centralia.

Centralia would be considered a small town in any era. It's population has always been around 10-12 thousand. But it's always been a railroad town. It was laid out in the 1850s by the Illinois Central. The Illinois Central is responsible for many towns in Illinois that were laid out by the railroad's surveyors and established to encourage people to move into the area the newly formed railroad would serve.

Centralia was served by 4 railroads in 1955. The two main lines of the IC met just north of Centralia (about 2 miles) at a tiny little town that still exists today called Junction City. The IC calls it Branch Junction on the timetable. The St Louis Division, the Springfield Division and the Illinois Division all meet at Branch Junction. Additionally the Missouri and Illinois Railroad (MOPAC) connected with the IC at Branch Junction and continued through town on IC tracks before getting back on it's own rails and heading west just south of the IC depot.

The Southern Railroad's line from Louisville, KY to St Louis, MO enters Centralia from the east and crosses the IC then runs parallel to it through downtown before continuing west.

The CB&Q built a line from Beardstown, IL to Paducah, KY around 1901 so they could access the coal fields in Southern Illinois. They had a division point equivalent operation in Centralia with a yard with the capacity to classify 2000 cars, a 9 stall roundhouse, livestock pens, a passenger depot and freight house that they shared with the Southern and a car repair shop to refurbish the hopper cars and gondolas they used in the coal fields. They employed 400 people in Centralia.

The IC had a huge operation. A six yard complex, a car building shop, a division point roundhouse 48 stalls including a 9 stall erecting building and backshop where they could build a locomotive from the wheels up. A large passenger depot, a large freight house.

There were plenty of industries to serve in Centralia. In the 1930s there was an oil boom in the area. They still pump oil there but no longer refine it there. There was a refinery with about a 3 mile pipeline to a loading facility on the IC just north of downtown. There were three oil field supply companies who received drilling equipment and pipes by rail. Hollywood Brands Candy was served by the IC. There were three lumber yards that were rail served. Two on the IC and one on the M&I. There were two wholesale food warehouses served by the IC. There was a shoe factory, a grain elevator and three small retail oil dealers. This is in addition to all of the coal traffic on the IC and the Q.

For passenger trains I can run everything from the Panama Limited and City of New Orleans to the CB&Q and M&I motorcars that served Centralia.

The more I think about it, the more I think that I can easily fill my building with Centralia and have enough variety and operations to keep me enjoying the hobby for the rest of my days.

I did want to model the bridge over the Little Wabash River though.

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## Town vs Station

Sat, 2018-01-06 15:19 — dave1905

Above is an example of the difference between a "town" and a "station". E. St. Louis was one "town" but had dozens of stations, a major yard for most of the railroads operating in Illinois and probably 10 railroads including two terminal railroads. A station is one place on a railroad. A station would be "smaller" than a town.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## Towns versus stations



Sat, 2018-01-06 16:03 — Bremner

The Pacific Electric had FIVE stations on the Los Angeles to Long Beach line in the city of Long Beach. There were quite a few other Long Beach stations, including large ones in East Long Beach and West Long Beach on other lines. The Balboa line had 15 stations in Long Beach.

am I the only N Scale Pacific Electric Freight modeler in the world?

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## Another Example Of A One Town Layout



Sat, 2018-01-06 16:28 — Rich\_S

Not to plug another magazine, but MR is currently running the Winston-Salem Southbound Railway Tar Branch. At 2'-9" x 8'2" it is a very good example of a one town layout that even has a drop down staging yard. To plug this magazine, the way the layout is setup, it can also be part of a larger TOMA layout if the owner ever has more room to expand the layout.

<http://mrr.trains.com/how-to/operation/2016/10/winston-salem-southbound-series-switching-the-winston-salem-southbound>

The Tar Branch was introduced in the January 2018 MR, but those with MRVP can watch the layout being constructed on that video magazine site.

In closing, I'd say TOMA's are perfect for one town layouts.

Cheers,

Rich S.

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### My layout is related to the one town concept.

Sat, 2018-01-06 17:01 — Lancaster Central 17

My layout is based on a city with a large industry, a small town on the opposite side of the backdrop and a branch wrapping around from the town to a small village. This is laid out on a 5'x6'6 " section. Staging makes the mainline a reversing loop to loop set up with 3 yard tracks. My mainline run is around 25' total including staging.

My railroad (the Lancaster Central) runs Passenger trains, through freight trains, manifests that stop at Lancaster and locals. I only have three team tracks and two industries on the modeled portion of the railroad. Two yard tracks and a run around in Lancaster city complete the set up.

Passenger trains stop at the city and town. Through freights slow down in the yard limits of Lancaster. They can meet the passenger trains at the siding if they arrive first (the siding is short).

The manifests run from north (Reading) or south (Baltimore) to Lancaster and interchange cars at the yard. The train continues north (or south) to the terminals. Cars are switched out in staging to represent Reading and Baltimore connections. The cars sitting on the appropriate track become the next train south (or north).

Locals work out of the yard and work Armstrong Cork, the quarry and the team tracks. The yard switcher sorts outbound and in bound cars. About 1/2 of the traffic serves Armstrong Cork.

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I also have traffic running up the branch to a large power plant and a small steel mill. I usually operate the branch as a separate railroad that has its own power. These trains have to use our track to interchange cars. Eventually I could swap power to run trains up the branch more efficiently. For now I treat them as normal traffic and they are sorted out by our switcher and then the short line shows up to take them to their destination. Currently the branch ends at the backdrop, I plan to extend it in the future. Possibly modeling the steel mill and power plant, or just staging on the shelf long enough for ~10 car trains.

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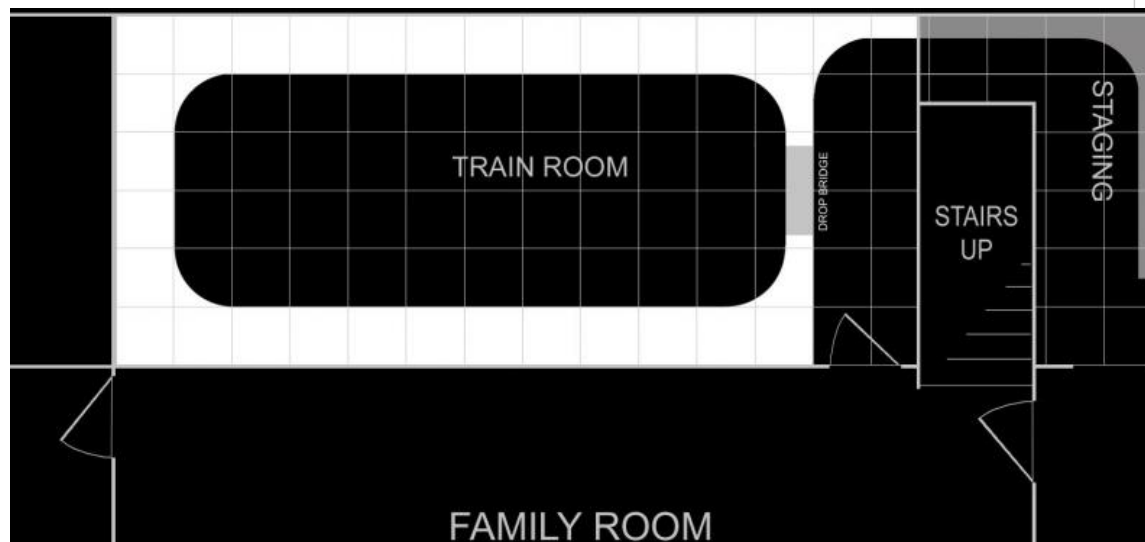
## Jim Six's layout

Sat, 2018-01-06 17:35 — James Six

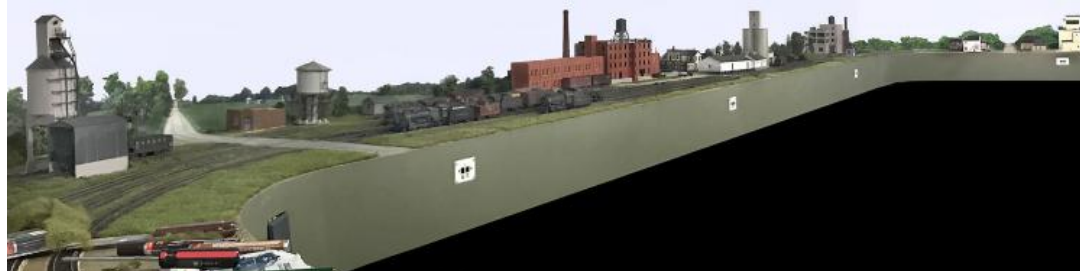
Here is my basement area that includes the train room. As you can see there is one staging area that can feed body directions around the layout. This is point-to-point but allows for through train operation. The photo below shows the layout section that is at the bottom, below the words TRAIN ROOM. The section above TRAIN ROOM is abandoned and will be rebuilt this year. The staging room is in place but the layout bench work is not started.

I am working on adding the track plan for y'all to review and comment on. This will take a day or two to get it done -- hopefully sometime tomorrow.

Jim Six



## Designing and Building One-town Layouts



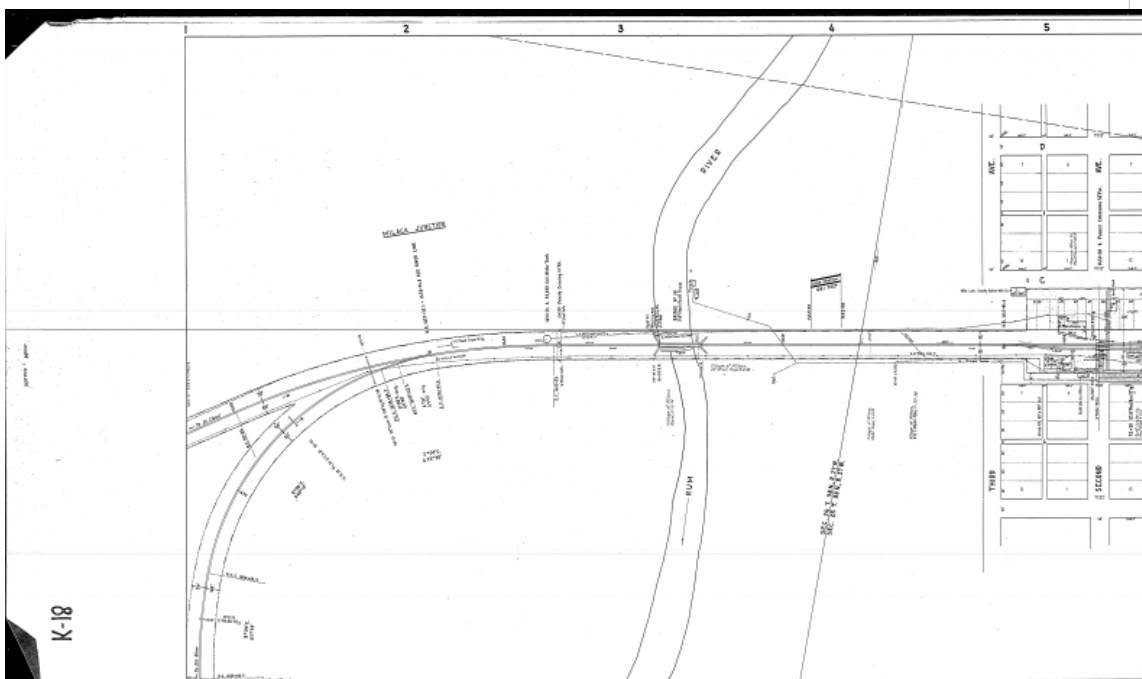
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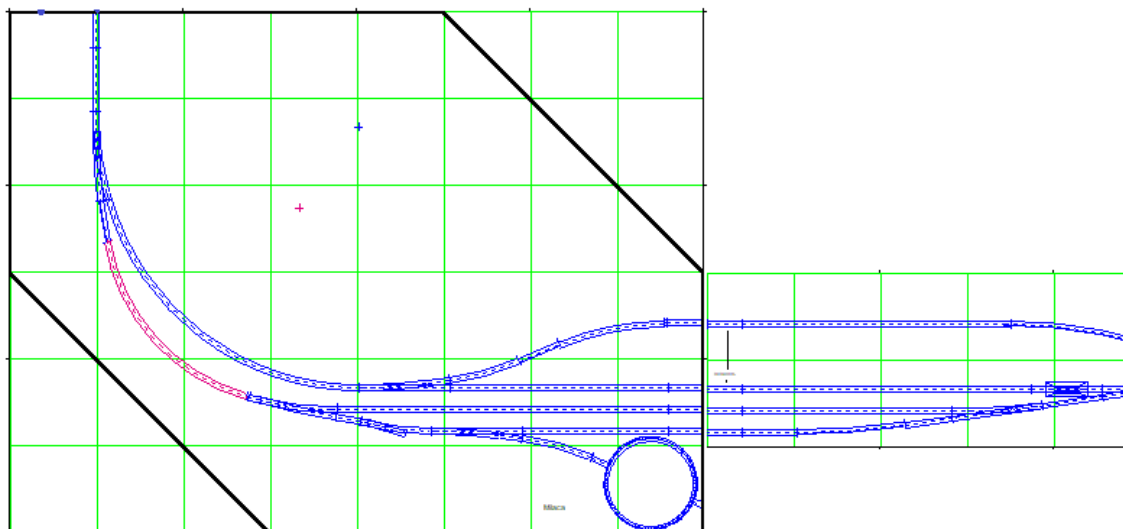
## Milaca, MN

Sat, 2018-01-06 17:58 — captpete

As I mentioned on my Princeton, MN one-town comment there are two other primary towns on the Great Northern Elk River to Milaca branch. You may have noticed that Princeton has 2 corner oNeTRAK modules to either connect with other modules (I hope to start a Model Railroad club here at the retirement complex) which could be either staging tracks, a loop, or the rest of the branchline for others to model the one-town concept. One such is Milaca, the junction with the Great Northern St. Cloud to Brook Park line. It's still a single-track main so could be oNeTRAK modules. Looks like some interesting switching with both a mainline and the branchline trains. Her's some photos, station plat and possible layout (rotated).







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## Stagging

Sat, 2018-01-06 19:40 — Don Hanley



Several posts back the need for stagging was questioned. Because of the constraints of my layout area, the garage, I don't have staging. I have to 0-5-0 the cars that come off the layout, and 0-5-0 the cars that come onto the layout. While this is doable, I don't really like it.

Disadvantages I have experienced with no staging.

1. Excessive handling of cars. I like fairly well detailed cars so the more they are handled the more chance of damaging detail parts
2. The inability of having through freights or a passenger train to add to the operational interest.
3. Storage required for cars. My layout has spots for 20 or so cars. The remaining 80-100 need to be stored.
4. Staging the train on the layout. It is more operational interesting to have the train come into town.

While none of the disadvantages are deal breakers they do limit on what I would like to do. Model railroading is full of compromises.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## @JWhite RE: Centralia

Sat, 2018-01-06 20:24 — gna



I think it sounds very doable to model just Centralia, though a 30x40 space would tempt me try some more...

Off topic, but was Centralia named "Centralia" because it was laid out by the Illinois Central? I did not know it was such an important railroad town. I knew of it only as the home of former Minnesota Twins great Gary Gaetti.

All of the rail traffic in a small city seems to prove Jim's point that railroading was much more important and interesting in earlier eras.

Gary

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@captpete

Sat, 2018-01-06 20:28 — gna

I am enjoying your earlier time period photos and research on towns on the Great Northern. You have mentioned oNeTrak--are you modeling in N scale? Is it possible to get good small steam in N scale?

Gary

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## Good morning Don,Welcome to

Sun, 2018-01-07 08:12 — James Six

Good morning Don,

Welcome to the world of serious compromise! 😊

We all make compromises. We have been over that so many times I almost hate making use of the word. Now, what you have done sure is better than not having a layout. That's the bottom line. And, I will wager that you have had a lot of fun and satisfaction with your "limited" layout. That sure beats doing without.

I waited until I was 58 years old before I had enough space to build my present layout and it is full of compromises. At my staging yard I still have to take cars on and off of the layout ( at the staging yard). I have about 150 cars and will use only half that at any time. I don't want to keep using the same cars in successive operating sessions if I can avoid it, unless it makes sense to do so. So I have to handle my cars manually. The cars when not on the layout are stored in a tall, wide case in the wall opposite the staging yard. There is a 30" aisle way between the staging yard and the storage case. I only need to turn about and there they are.

One of the reasons that I like Accurail cars (they are my standard) is that they withstand handling better than fancier freight cars. Also, I am the only person that does the duty of handling the cars. I do it before an operating session.

The only reason that I have a staging yard is so I can have through trains, otherwise I would not bother and I would make better use of the space for other things. There is little doubt that the lack of through trains limits operating possibilities, but as I said above, it would sure beat doing without a layout!

Jim Six

## Modeling the Depression Era in HO-scale





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## Cassette

Sun, 2018-01-07 08:42 — dave1905

Several posts back the need for staging was questioned. Because of the constraints of my layout area, the garage, I don't have staging.

Without having a clue what the actual physical constraints are, I would like to throw out a suggestion for situations like this. Cassette staging. A removable piece that can hold a cut/train. It doesn't require a permanent extension. You need a "socket" a mating/docking fixture at the edge of the layout and then some sort of support to hold the other end level. That support could be a something sitting on a shelf, table, workbench or cabinet, or clamped to a shelf or door/door frame. It could even be a freestanding support (camera tripod, power tool roller stand without the roller, etc). At the beginning of the session you position the cassette support. You assemble the cars for the inbound cut on the cassette, and when its entry approaches, set it in place. The train /cut enters the layout, does its thing, then exits back onto the cassette. The cassette is removed to a safe place and the session is finished or the next cassette is positioned. You could put a cassette on each end to handle run through options.

Down side is the train/cut will be fairly short, the longer the cut the harder it is to handle the cassette without tipping it over and derailing the cars. Up side is you get staging and to "turn the train" to come back the other way, you just make the cassette mate/dock on both ends and physically turn the cassette. Extra 1234 West runs through you layout in the morning and then Extra 1234 East returns back that afternoon.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## Cassette Idea

Sun, 2018-01-07 09:58 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

Somewhere I saw a cassette in which the rails were actually the edges of aluminum angle stock set to gauge. The angle stock could have some kind of padding on the inside so that the cars didn't excessively wobble when transporting the cassette to another location. Like you mentioned Dave the length is limited probably to no more than four feet to handle it comfortably. A shelf could be built in the same fashion as the cassette so the cars could be rolled off. Our British friends are experts on these.

Robert

(MILW in downtown Dubuque)

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## Cassettes

Sun, 2018-01-07 10:58 — dave1905

On my previous layout I had cassette staging for a branch, I used a plywood base with aluminum angle glued to gauge. I could use two feeder wires with alligator clips to the angles if I wanted to run an engine onto the cassette. I would also say that four feet is about as long as I would want to go.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Cassette Support

Sun, 2018-01-07 12:16 — Jackh

I think I saw some where that somebody used a rolling cart to roll the cassette up to the end of his layout. The cart was homemade and at the right hight to allow rail joiners to slide right on. This could be a good idea where the layout is right at the edge of a doorway that can't be blocked by a table ect to support a cassette on.

Jack

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### "I saw some where that

Sun, 2018-01-07 12:27 — ctmf74

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*"I saw some where that somebody used a rolling cart to roll the cassette up to the end of his layout. The cart was homemade and at the right hight to allow rail joiners to slide right on."*

That sounds like the dim sum method of staging?....DaveB



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## Jim Six's Trackplan

Sun, 2018-01-07 13:10 — James Six

Here is my track plan for my one-town layout. You can click on it for a larger image. The grid is 2' x 2' squares.

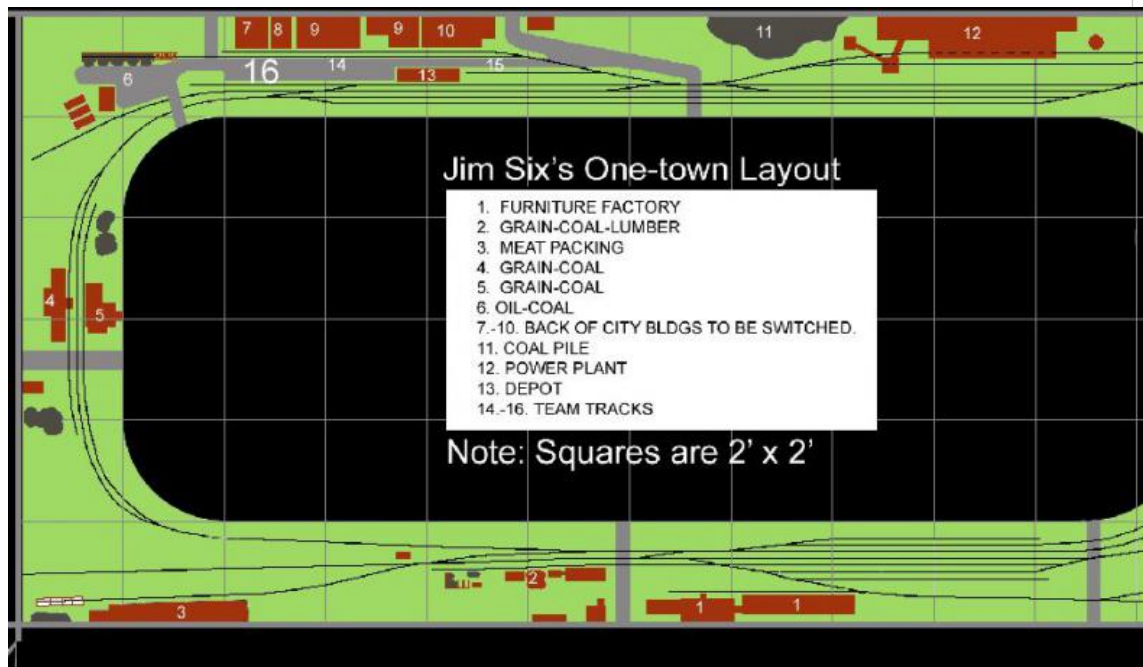
I have not drawn in the staging tracks at the far right. You can imagine several tracks there for staged trains. Remember that this layout is set in a 1925-1935 time frame. The city buildings will all have loading doors along the track so boxcars will be spotted at any of them (buildings 7-10). The large facility to the right of the city buildings is the power plant. It receives 900 tons of coal every other day and will be served by a dedicated coal train. The coal train is treated as an extra.

There are three grain elevators that also have coal, lumber, feed, and supplies. Item-6 in the upper left is a coal and bulk oil dealer. The coal is unloaded on a coal trestle at the end of the long team track #14. Oil has its own siding. Item-3 is a meat packing plant (reefers!). And item-1 is the furniture factory. The small locomotive facility is at the lower right.

As always, I eagerly look forward to your comments, questions, opinions, and questions.

Jim Six

Modeling 1925-1935





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## Click to enlarge

Sun, 2018-01-07 13:23 — umauma railway

Jim:

Interesting plan! I really expected a wye into staging if only for breaking in equipment and testing. Now I am interested in the operational plan.

Only one password by siding?

Interchange and yard at lower right?

All train originate from staging or will a local be assigned to each station? Curious minds ...

Resizing the image to 750-800p would give the big picture but clicking it to enlarge works for me.

Neil Erickson, Umauma, HI

Visit my [weblog](#).

[Experimenting with TOMA](#)

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## Staging on rolling cart

Sun, 2018-01-07 13:41 — sailormatlac



This is exactly what Rick de Candido does with his excellent [Fillmore Avenue Roundhouse layout](#). It even includes a fancy elevator. Instead of one town, Rick when further and only modelled a portion of a larger steam locomotive facility. No consists, only locomotives. You can see [his carts](#).

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>

Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>

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## Neil -- Click to enlarge

Sun, 2018-01-07 13:44 — James Six

Hi Neil,

I will answer your questions.

- The small yard at the lower right is mainly for switching. Allows to maneuver cars for switching to the local industries.
- While interchange was not a primary design objective, I have allowed for it at a couple of places. You spotted it at the lower right. The track that runs to the edge of the layout can be treated as a dummy mainline while the track across the drop bridge could offer interchange from the staging yard. The other place is at the lower left. The track that runs to the wall there can penetrate the wall and run into our storage room. It could hug a parallel wall for ten feet offering interchange. I have not decided on that as yet. Just how much is enough?! LOL
- The intention is to have trains originate, but I can also have a train originate on either side of the layout, meaning at the station.
- As for adding a track in the upper right to create a wye and continuous running, I can do that too. Just not decided as yet. Continuous running is good for breaking in locomotives and cars. True. It also makes the grand kids happy since they are not into operation -- yet!

Thanks for your message Neil,

Jim Six

## Modeling the Depression Era in HO-scale



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@Gary

Sun, 2018-01-07 13:48 — JWhite

I've read two different stories about how the railroad chose the name Centralia. The city of Centralia's official story is that in 1853 when the railroad founded the town that it was named Centralia because it was the center of the rail system in Illinois. I've also heard that it was named Centralia because it was the center of the rail system that was constructed up to that time. It definitely wasn't the center in Illinois because it's about 2/3 of the distance between Chicago and the Ohio river. An interesting aside is that the railroads made Centralia and they also have caused it's decline. In the late 1950s and early 60s when the routes of the Interstate Highway System were being laid out, the city fathers of Centralia told the people planning the routes that they did not want the interstate to come through Centralia. This was in deference to their two major employers, the IC and CB&Q railroads. At that time the two railroads employed almost 1500 people in Centralia. The railroads were engaging in a huge lobbying battle to keep the interstate system from being constructed. If you look through railroad published employee magazines from the 1950s you'll find all kinds of editorials urging the employees to contact their legislators with the talking points of how the interstate highway system amounted to a taxpayer subsidy of the trucking industry. A search on youtube will bring up some railroad promotional videos that were made to be shown to civic groups talking about how vital the railroads were and how they paid taxes and built their infrastructure with their own money. The Centralia city fathers listened to the railroads that were the lifeblood of the local economy and I57 passes Centralia 9 miles to the east and I64 is 9 miles to the south. Centralia has been in an economic decline ever since. In the 1990s they got the state and federal government to widen US 51 from I64 to Centralia into 4 lanes in an effort to keep what industry was left from leaving and to spur new growth. But the damage was done.

Jim is right about railroads being much more important in earlier eras. We didn't have the paved roads and reliable vehicles that we do now. Almost everything moved by rail. That said, the IC talks about losing traffic to the trucking industry as early as 1936 in their book Organization and Traffic of the Illinois Central. And the railroads were jumping into trucking themselves. In the 1930s the IC stopped serving many of their small freight houses in southern Illinois. They bought a fleet of trucks and stationed them at the Carbondale, Illinois freight house. The fast LCL trains no longer stopped and dropped off cars containing LCL at the smaller freight houses on the main line. The train would leave Chicago in the evening and arrive at Carbondale around midnight. All of the LCL cars for the freight houses in southern Illinois would be

dropped in Carbondale and a crew would unload them, sort the freight and transload it onto the IC owned trucks. The trucks would then be dispatched to the local freight houses where customers would pick up their freight after 8 am. This allowed them to cut the time it took to get the merchandise trains from Chicago to Memphis. Apparently speeding up that schedule made them enough money that they made money even with the extra cost for the men at the Carbondale freight house and the trucks and drivers.

All four railroads serving Centralia had operating freight houses through the 1950s. The IC had a large one, the CB&Q and Southern shared one and the M&I had one.

I could easily fill my 30x40 building with a layout that just models Centralia. Yard limits started at Branch Junction a couple miles north of town and went to Irvington on the IC, a distance of 10 miles.

Jeff White

Alma, IL

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## Continuous running connection

Sun, 2018-01-07 14:04 — joef

Jim, if I was in your shoes, I'd add the continuous run connection, but weather it and ballast it as a secondary track, and treat it ordinarily as an interchange, with cars parked on it.

When the grandkids come over, remove the cars and let the grandkids have their continuous running fun. Or if you're open for a show, likewise you can easily keep trains running while you entertain visitors.

But when you're doing ops, treating the track like an interchange lets you park cars there and treat it like another industry you can switch. But because it has cars on it, it won't be seen as the main or as a continuous running "cheat."

**Joe Fugate**

Publisher, Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine



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## Joe -- Continuous running connection & updated trackplan

Sun, 2018-01-07 15:02 — James Six

You just convinced me Joe. 😊 Jim





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## Coal silos

Sun, 2018-01-07 15:02 — [dssa1051@yahoo.com](mailto:dssa1051@yahoo.com)

Jim, I don't see a coal dealer with silos. I sent you photos of it but it was actually Sturgis Grain Co. so your idea of an elevator with a coal business is certainly prototypical. You could change the meat packing plant to the Kraft Cheese plant like in Kendallville, IN on the GR&I. How about including the a diamond on that interchange track?

Like Joe I'd recommend a continuous run option. None of us are getting any younger and just running the train can be therapeutic when those health problems pop up.

Robert

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Silo coal yard added at 8:00

Sun, 2018-01-07 15:28 — James Six

Silo coal yard added at 8:00 o'clock on the layout.

Jim   

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## Operations

Sun, 2018-01-07 15:33 — umauma railway

Thanks for the explanation Jim. You and Matt (one town layout in 10'x12') nearly have me convinced to go the same way in my 16'x24' space in On30.

Neil Erickson, Umauma, HI

Visit my [weblog](#).

[Experimenting with TOMA](#)

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## Jim, of your track plans I

Sun, 2018-01-07 19:55 — BOK

Jim, of your track plans I like this one the best.

It has continuous operation, the wye offers out and back running for a freight or passenger through train on the main, and point to point by running a transfer job from the yard on one side to the industries on the other turning the engines on each end if desired.

A simple plan with lots of options if desired.

Barry

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## Barry -- Jim, of your track plans I

Sun, 2018-01-07 20:22 — James Six

Thanks Barry. Sounds like I may have achieved what I am after. Now to build the other side (top on track plan)!

Jim Six 😊



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## James you have definitely

Sun, 2018-01-07 20:41 — Virginian and L...



James you have definitely captured your goals with that plan. I suspect you might have done such a good job there will be people copying the plan and using it for their own version!

Rob in Texas

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## Like the latest

Mon, 2018-01-08 02:26 — Sn2modeler

Jim, I like the plan, it represents that small city with a single station and multiple switching locations. I can think of many locations in Ohio like this, and even narrow gauge railroads had towns like this (The not so little Two foot gauge SR&RL even had several multi-switching location towns - Farmington, Strong, Phillips, Kingfield....). Have a town like this on a multi-town layout is hard to do...as it consumes much of the mainline that someone would want to have. So this is just one type of operating layout...Cool!

I like the idea of adding the continuous run as an interchange. However, to me it does not so much look like an interchange. Or maybe it could be a very small one. Given the size of your town/city I think you might be justified in having a long track or multiple tracks for interchange. I've seen many locations on the DT&I and other RR's where the curved track was not used for leaving cars, but used as a connection between the RR. The actual interchange occurred on tracks parallel to one of the RR's main line. More of a 1-2 track interchange yard. (DT&I interchanges all through Lima, B&O/C&O in Cottage Grove, IN).

I considered modeling Lima, OH on the DTI, but the longer trains of 1976 seemed too long, maybe I should reconsider....Or consider it in the age of Steam...Henry ford ran a very nice RR back in 1920's....

As for operation, your city/town seems quite large. You could justify a local switcher and making it all in yard limits. Richmond, IN on the C&O was like this as was Muncie I think....Washington Court House on the B&O was like this. Each of those locations had multiple railroads going through and interchange traffic was a major part of the town. I understand that the B&O had a dedicated switcher in Washington Court House into the 1970's or maybe 80's or later....WCH still is a hub of activity for the IORY today with switch jobs.

I'm sure many of you can think of locations near your (or of interest to you) that would have had a switcher and be worth modeling...They might not have classified trains, but would have had blocks for trains, done interchange, etc... In the 1900-1940's interchange took place in small city/towns everywhere.

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## ONE town layout

Mon, 2018-01-08 06:34 — dave1905

point to point by running a transfer job from the yard on one side to the industries on the other turning the engines on each end if desired.

Not if its a "one town layout". If its one town then the yard on one side is the exact same place as the industries on the other side of the room. Its ONE station. The railroad won't turn trains at each end of the yard because its the same place.

There are basically two operating options, a dedicated switch engine, that all it does is switch this town or the switching is provided by locals. If there are locals there could be one per day (tri-weekly service) and it would alternate running east and west on successive days, or it could be double daily service, with a local in each direction, each day. If there is a switch engine the through freights and locals set out and pick up cars at the station and the yard engine switches them and works the industries. There could be more than one shift of switch engines, so some of the industries could be switched on one shift and some on the other.

If the locals switch the industries then the through freights might set out or pick up cuts, but the local would come through and do the industry work, and leave. If its double daily service, then the locals might get there at different times (or even different shifts) or they might overlap at the station.

Since this is a pre-WW2 operation, then there aren't "unit trains", every car is its own shipment. The power plant would get set outs of coal cars from through freights or a coal train (but not a unit train).

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## The Winston-Salem Southbound

Mon, 2018-01-08 07:32 — WANDRR



The MR video of the Winston-Salem Southbound was very informative. Thank you to the gentleman that posted it. Now I'll have to try to find out more about that layout and how all the waybills and car cards are made. Railroad operations are a little new to me, but I really enjoy the puzzle aspect of the switching layout and am trying to come up with a plan that will fit a 4' x 6' "L" - maybe a little small for the "One Town" premise, but certainly large enough for multiple industries.

TJ R.

Mobile, AL (Originally from New Haven, IN)

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## Rob -- James you have definitely

Mon, 2018-01-08 08:30 — James Six

People can copy all they want. I have no problem with that as long as they don't claim it to be their design! LOL 😊

Jim Six

## Modeling the Depression Era in HO-scale



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## Dave -- ONE town layout

Mon, 2018-01-08 08:49 — James Six

The layout is definitely one town. We have to keep in mind that most model railroaders are not accustomed to having their town spread out to near scale distance/spacing, so it looks like a big town. It is not really. As spread out as I have it, it is still somewhat compressed.

The big advantage to having the town so spread out is that it takes quite a while to switch the town. To move the locomotive from one location to another takes time. In fact, in past operating sessions with the side that is approaching completion, several operators who are used to operating on big layouts with multiple towns became nervous that it took so long and suggested I add cross-over switches and/or move on-line customers closer together. Ain't no way! It is the way it was with the prototype as far as spacing and track arrangement. Live with it! It's realistic.

I have considered one switch engine. I acquired a 2-6-0 as a switcher for the power plant. I don't think it would do much else. The local trains would switch the town. I could expand the duties of the town switcher and use a larger locomotive. I would need your coaching and that of others to understand how this could work. I do not want to give up the local trains. They are my very favorite in all of railroading.

The local will be just as you said Dave. Southbound on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and northbound Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Sundays are off.

I have planning a dedicated coal train for the power plant. However, it won't be a "unit train". It will be an "extra" freight. It may or may not include tank cars for oil to feed the power plant's AUX BOILER (auxiliary boiler) when the plant is off-line and the main boiler is not operating. Sometimes the tank cars could be delivered by the local freight. What do you think? Also, there will be flat cars and gons to the power plant carrying a turbine rotor, generator rotor, and other assorted items as needed (fairly infrequently).

Jim Six

## Modeling the Depression Era in HO-scale



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Dave, my friend, not true

Mon, 2018-01-08 09:26 — BOK

Dave, my friend, not true about the transfers. Think Chicago ...most all of them in the city and flocks of them running around all over town delivering to each other's yard but generally not pulling from them. When I was running the WC Wisconsin Central in Minneapolis we had nightly transfers which met the pre-blocked through freight from Wisconsin and made trips to the Soo at Humboldt Yd. and the BN at Northtown each night and we didn't even have a yard where we met the inbound crew...just a couple of "for now" holding tracks. Sure this is a description of a modern short line/regional operation but I am sure if you looked there were probably some like that back in the day you model.

But Jim wants to keep the locals so that's his plan ...I was just suggesting another form of operation to add to his neat layout. The yard on the bottom half of the room with engine facilities appeared to be a great place to originate a transfer to handle cars off through, freights over to a switcher on the other side of town. And yes transfers did turn power from time to time at each end of the run if required. They had to pay the owning road a small fee to use their turntable or wye but it was done. Obviously, when diesels came on the scene the need to turn power was lessened but it still happened to put a better unit in the lead (radio/heater/good engine) without busting up the consist and causing more delay/problems.

I think, even as prototype modelers we sometimes need to back away from some of the seriousness and remember this is still a hobby for enjoyment and this coming from a guy who spent many years switching cars and running engines for the prototype. Maybe compromise can be good if it adds to the satisfaction of building and operating a small railroad?

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Barry

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## Jim, I like your idea to add

Mon, 2018-01-08 09:30 — BOK

Jim, I like your idea to add operation for your coal fired power plant with an extra handling coal and other supplies for the facility. With your experience in the power generation business you would know what they would need and a run like this would supply an interesting mix of cars at times.

Barry

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## I know from reading about the



Mon, 2018-01-08 09:34 — Virginian and L...

I know from reading about the Virginian and some other coal roads during the era you are working on and at later times there were solid coal trains and they were not unit trains just as the reefers in a long string were not unit trains. They seemed to be handled in long strings and sorted later as they would be billed to multiple customers.

Not sure but guessing here. Could not the reason for the coal and other aggregates traveling for the most part separate from merchandise trains be due to class of freight and the possibility of delivery schedules? The small engines you have might not be suitable for an additional 20 cars or it could be such that the passing sidings would not accommodate the train. Also could the coal come from another road and be dropped at an interchange track for your local to work later?

That would give you a good excuse to buy some of that higher grade coal from the B&O, C&O, N&W, or Virginian for your power plant. From newspaper articles I have read that is one reason some of the coal mines sold so much coal at higher prices. One quote from the newspaper I read about the 1880s was a bushel of wheeling coal produced the same amount of heat as 2 or 3 bushel of another source. Now keep in mind it was a newspaper and much like today they don't hate facts they are just indifferent to them.

Rob in Texas

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## Think Chicago ...



Mon, 2018-01-08 09:58 — JC Shall

*Think Chicago ...*

I agree with Barry about transfers in larger cities, but I think Dave would essentially be correct for a smaller town (station) such as Jim is modeling. As stretched out as his town is, it's still a pretty small place relative to the real world.

**-Jack**

[Louisiana Central Railroad](#)

[The Louisiana Central Blog](#)

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## I can't see this town having

Mon, 2018-01-08 09:58 — Douglas Meyer

I can't see this town having enough traffic to pay for keeping a switcher located there. You need fuel, supplies such as lubricant as well as a storage location to keep the engine, then you have to pay for the crew. And figure out how to get them there as the union probably won't let you relocate them. And don't forget that switch engines are usually slow with limited fuel and water capacity. And yet they are required to go in for inspections and maintenance on a regular basis. So you have to deadhead a slow engine back to the shop and arrange to return the crew to their starting point. Usually this means an extra run or swapping out engines. The C&O tried this on a steep branch line with huge 4 truck shays but the cost and the problems were just too expensive to be practical. So unless they are spending 7 or more hours a day continuously switching you will seldom see a local switcher unless a big industry is paying for it. They would do this so they didn't have to wait for the railroad to swap the cars out. As that could hold up the work in the industry.

At least on the C&O there were locations where a west bound train would drop cars off, usually for facing point sidings and a later train going east bound would set them on the correct sidings. And obviously the referee would happen.

And each train would pull the cars from their trailing point sidings that were to go the other direction so that the opposite train would not have to pull facing point, the object being for the railroad to make switching as fast and easy as it could. The railroad has to pay its staff and it costs money to keep an engine running so anything that shortened the time it takes to set out a car is good from the point of view of the railroad.

-Doug Meyer

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## Dave, my friend, not true

Mon, 2018-01-08 10:23 — dave1905

Dave, my friend, not true about the transfers. Think Chicago ...most all of them in the city and flocks of them running around all over town delivering to each other's yard but generally not pulling from them. When I was running the WC Wisconsin Central in Minneapolis we had nightly transfers which met the pre-blocked through freight from Wisconsin and made trips to the Soo at Humboldt Yd. and the BN at Northtown each night

Correct. But Barry, my friend, those were interchanges, from railroad A to railroad B. With Jim's layout it's all ONE place on ONE railroad. I know railroads run transfers between yards where there was a merger and what was two railroads became one, so they transfer between their own yards (I have managed or set up several of those situations) but this isn't that case, this is all ONE station with ONE railroad. There is nothing to transfer between.

Now if you wanted to make the layout a "conventional" layout with multiple stations or multiple towns, or the junction between two railroads, sure, you would be exactly correct. But that wouldn't be a "one town" layout.

OK, I will correct myself, you could make it a "one town" layout and make it the interchange between two railroads, so each would have their own operation, that would be interesting. For example, Ogden UT would have the UP, SP and DRGW, Salt Lake City would have the UP, WP and DRGW, Wilmington, DE would have the PRR, B&O and RDG all running together.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## Servicing the Power Plant

Wed, 2018-01-10 10:42 — James Six

After reading all of your comments and suggestions I see that I have not been far off what happened in the real world of railroading back in the 1920s and 1930s. There are lots of options for operation of my layout, no doubt. Keep in mind that it does not have to be operated in the same way each time we operate. I can shift to an alternate operation.

I did work in the electrical power generation business for more than two decades. I was at three different power plants (same company). Two of them were nuclear, but I did spend just over two years at a coal fired plant that went on line way back in 1905. It was old but it was coal. I do know how these plants operated and want to introduce the needs of a 1920s power plant into my operation.

In doing so I need to be realistic about the amount of coal the plant would receive. My plant will have two 50MW generators making the plant a 100MW power plant. This is  $100 \times 24 = 2400$  MWh per day. Back in the 1920s a ton of coal produced roughly 1.5 MWh, That is, 1.5 MW for an hour. Doing the math this translates to 900 tons of coal per day for my power plant. At 50 tons per hopper car this is 18 coal cars per day. Perfect for my model railroad operations! The railroad will be busy hauling coal to this power plant.

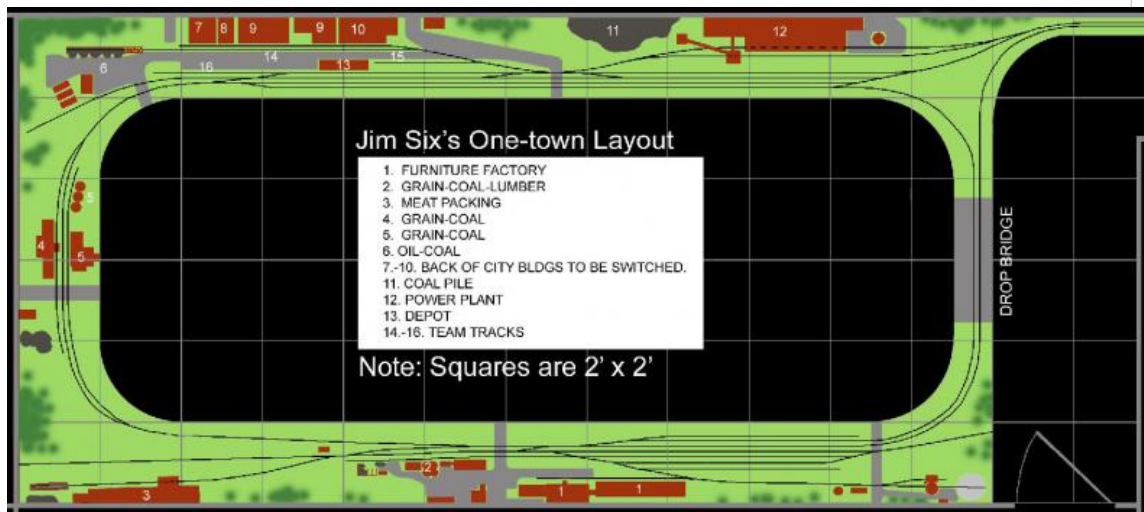
What about the physical space needed? I just measured my coal hauling freight cars. One 2-bay 50 ton hopper car takes 4.5" of length when coupled. So,  $18 \times 4.5" = 81"$  for the train plus locomotive and caboose. I found that one 50-ton gon and one 50-ton hopper total 11" when coupled. This means that the train length will be 99" for a train of half gons and half hoppers plus locomotive and caboose. So, a train can be up to ten feet long in total. Since my yard on the power plant side has about 13.5' long sidings I will have no difficulty fitting an 18-car coal train. Easy fit!

Somebody on my other blog brought up "situational awareness" as being important to getting full enjoyment out of the hobby. I call all of the above analysis part of situational awareness. As a result we all know what went into my design of that side of the layout and we now have a good idea of what it will take to operate it. There is a lot that can be done with a one-town layout.

Model Railroading is fun! 😊

Jim Six

NOTE: I revised the track plan in the area of the "wye" and across the drop bridge.



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Not sure but guessing here.

Mon, 2018-01-08 10:39 — dave1905

Not sure but guessing here. Could not the reason for the coal and other aggregates traveling for the most part separate from merchandise trains be due to class of freight and the possibility of delivery schedules?

In the modern railroad we call these types of things "commodity networks". Most of the coal flows together, most of it comes from the same, relatively small, area and much of it goes to a relatively the same area. The Reading flowed its coal out of an area maybe 50 miles square into St. Clair, PA and then ran coal, mostly to Phillie or Bethlehem, out of there. The coal moved separately because the cars generally moved in a different flow than the other manifest. Plus a coal train is heavy (when loaded) so it goes slowly, its a drag freight. By keeping it together, it allowed the more time sensitive general freight to move faster. Reefers were the same idea, but in the opposite direction, they wanted to move faster than general freight, so a solid reefer train went faster than a "slower" general freight train.

One of the things that very few modelers model is tonnage adjustment. For example on the RDG, the labor agreements allowed crews up to 4 set outs or pick ups to adjust tonnage. There were several yards that were filled with coal cars where trains adjusted their tonnage to grade changes. So 100 car trains might run to the base of the hill, then set out 25 cars and take 75 cars over the hill to the bottom on the other side, where they would pick up 25 cars, bringing the train back up to 100 cars for the run to the tidewater port. When 75 cars built up at the base of the hill, they would originate a train to run over the hill to provide pick ups for the rest of the trains, or every 4th train over the hill would be terminated to use for fills.

The UP and CNW called coal trains will many smaller cuts for smaller customers on them "grocery" trains. They would run from the mines in the Powder River basin along the E-W main, setting out blocks of 10-50 cars for small power plants along the way, then an empty train would run back the other way gathering up the empties.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## Power Plant arrangement

Mon, 2018-01-08 13:08 — James Six

Coal cars were run up into a dump building where the hopper doors of gondola drop bottom doors were opened. Coal dropped into a pit where it was conveyer lifted up to the the top of the boiler house for feeding to the boiler. For the coal pile coal was moved via conveyer to the coal pile era where bull dozers pushed it up and onto the pile. This is why my track plan shows two conveyers from where the coal was dumped.

Here is the power plant that I will be basing mine on. This one was located in Bluffton OH. I believe that the NKP served the plant. You can see the coal pile to the left of the plant and the switchyard to the right of it. Between the coal pile and the smoke stack is the coal dump building with a cut of hoppers.

Jim Six



## Modeling Sturgis, Michigan in 1927



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## Not quite one town ...

Mon, 2018-01-08 13:48 — Art Kuperstein

on my developing Ma & Pa in the late 1940s, has been an evolution because of a long series of issues...time constraints (work), down-sizing, and then personal cardiac adventures. Hope the "not quite one town" does not disqualify the comments here. Nevertheless, following this and other inspirational threads/modelers, a bit of modeling reality has set in...somewhat, at 72 y/o.! My original 3 deck 1940's (thinking of back sliding the era here too) Ma & Pa has been selectively reduced to an 8' x 18' single deck at this point. There are two, typically photogenic (very important for me to include) yet operational, small towns. Easy for manual control of turnouts. A small staging yard is present with the obligatory "grandkids continuous track option." Admittedly it was very difficult for me to eliminate more photogenic locales and operations.

Fortunately the short trains (through freight, passenger, locals), short cars, and single locomotive concept fits and also permits the unique Ma & Pa oxymoronic *leisurely* TT&TO operation to be employed. Some artistic license is employed to afford additional operation in such small towns. Additionally, the prototype distance between Fallston (22.3 mp) and Vale (24.2 mp) = 1.9 miles. So for me, the short running distance of the single mainline track works.

Yet this more manageable yet operational layout, though not one-town, works, so far, in the virtual operational schema and hopefully in the achievable modeled version....soon. Below is a current view from staging towards Vale (L) and Fallston (R). 37 degrees F in our garage!!

Jim - I too like your new one-town version of your track plan. Thanks for sharing it. Informative blog here as well.

Art



Art Kuperstein

MPRRHS Editor - TIMETABLE quarterly

M&PRR c.1949 ...for now

Langhorne, Pa

Ma & Pa RR Website-

<http://maparr.weebly.com>

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Oil at coal fired power plants

Mon, 2018-01-08 14:53 — fecbill

The plant that I worked at used either oil or if available natural gas as the start up fuel as well. The boilers had to be fired with oil to a certain point before coal could be introduced. This plant went on line in 1950 and was pulverized coal fired.

Jim was the 1909 era plant where you worked pulverized coal or was it a stoker fired boiler?

Another advantage or earlier times or at least an industry built earlier, smaller in overall size and easier to model in our limited space.

Bill Michael

Modeling GST, generic southern town, circa 1950-62

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## Ma & Pa

Mon, 2018-01-08 15:04 — dave1905

Fortunately the short trains (through freight, passenger, locals), short cars, and single locomotive concept fits and also permits the unique Ma & Pa oxymoronic *leisurely* TT&TO operation to be employed.

I have a book on the Ma & Pa and in it they mention that at one point early in the history, the Ma & Pa was so "leisurely" that they had some head on collisions and were cited for their poor dispatching and rules compliance. Gives your operators a wide swath to operate and be "prototypical".

Just as an aside, if the Ma & Pa had completed its "manifest destiny" and expanded as far northward as its ambition permitted, the W&N branch would have been a direct competitor, in fact the W&N operated one of the shortlines the Ma & Pa had designs on back in the mid 1890's while the shortline was in receivership, right before it was abandoned.

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## Bill -- Oil at coal fired power plants

Mon, 2018-01-08 15:36 — James Six

The fossil plant I was at was originally stoker fired, but eventually converted to pulverized coal, but that was post 1950. In the era that I am modeling we are dealing with stoker fired. Right now I am researching what the older plants did with the coal ash and fly ash along with cinders. I am hoping that I find the railroad hauled it away. If so, this will make for more switching of freight cars in and out of the power plant.

Living a dream! 😊

Jim



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## Morning and afternoon switch crews

Mon, 2018-01-08 20:43 — Free-Mo Tim

The second picture in my Canton Freight House blog <http://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/node/21964> shows a compact switching district that was served by both a morning and afternoon crew. The typical power for this job in 1953 was either a 0-6-0 or Alco S-4 diesel.

The morning crew stopped at the B&O interchange at Allen Ave on their way to Canton yard and brought any cars to be sorted and/or spotted. However, filling the freight house was the first priority for the morning crew. They also serviced other customers in this area then took all the outbound cars that had accumulated to the bigger yard 3 miles south after 12:00PM. A second switch crew came to continue spotting and pulling cars during the afternoon (including any freight dropped by the PRR) then pulling all the outbound cars from the freight house. The crew would sort the cars into blocks by destination(s) to make the building of the various "Fast Freights" easier at the main yard in Brewster. A larger road engine would be dispatched to retrieve the freight house traffic due to the size/weight of the train.

If the engine facilities on Jim's "one town" design were superseded by a nearby larger yard and engine facility, I could see the railroad leaving what was still functional to support a local switcher. Or, the first train of the day could do like on my prototype and bring the "town/industry" switcher at dawn with some cars for important customers. Then the switcher and crew depart after all the work is done for the day, acting as a "sweeper" for any cars left behind.

Thanks to all that are sharing in this discussion!!

Tim Moran Akron, OH

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## One "town?"

Mon, 2018-01-08 22:07 — p51

I model an **extremely** rural area of the Blue Ridge mountains. There's no 'town' as such at all, but communities very close to each other had different names.

Would that qualify as a one town layout?

**LEE**



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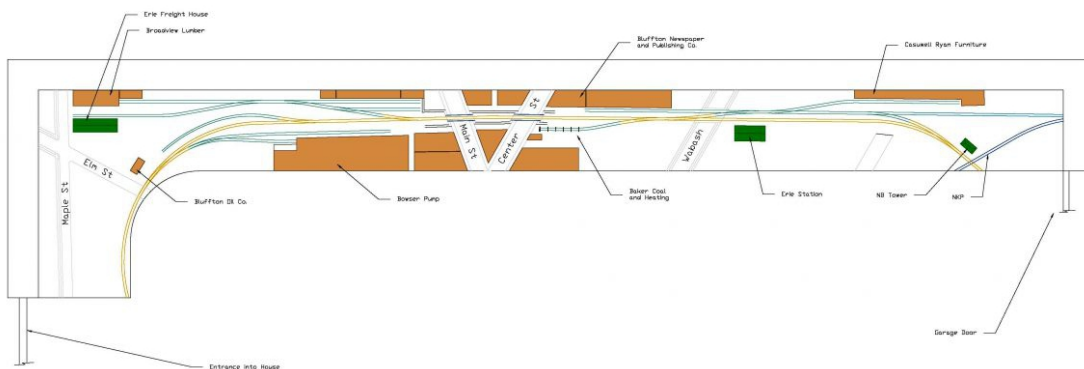
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## One Town Layout design

Mon, 2018-01-08 23:41 — Don Hanley



As I mentioned in a previous post I don't have the ability to have off layout staging. Here is the plan for my layout that has been built. The buildings right now are temporary mockup buildings which I added to give a feel for what the finish layout will be like. The town is Bluffton IN. While Bluffton was never this robust, on my proto-lanced line it is.



The bottom left of the layout heads to Huntington IN, the right to Dayton OH. To operate the local starts with the caboose clear of Elm St having arrived in town from Huntington. The local has between 4-6 cars, much more and it becomes a real problem since the run around track holds 6 - 40' cars plus the caboose. I have an extension that I add to the right end of the layout so that I can have a locomotive and 3-40' cars clear the Erie/NKP diamond and switch points. This section is removable so the family car can be parked in the garage. The layout is 22' x 4'-6" on the short leg. the width is 22" Layout area is 45-1/2 sf, so this is a small layout

Cars from the Erie/NKP interchange are either switched to one of the local industries or go back to Huntington. Another twist to operations is to have a car spotted on the on the runaround track that was dropped off from a Dayton to Huntington freight. The local is limited and can not run the locomotive on to the coal trestle at Baker Coal and Heating. This limitation requires a couple of cars in front of the locomotive to reach coal cars on the trestle. Also the local can't use the Broadway Lumber track as a lead when switching Wayne Feeds, so they need to watch out for cars at the freight house.

With the limited run around space, limited space on each end, and operational limits it's very easy to get your self into a real tight spot while switching the town. On average it can take between 1-1/2 to 2 hrs to switch the town. At the end of a session the locomotive is at Elm Street heading back to Huntington.

The homes along maple Maple St on the left were covered in my 3-d back drop article <http://mrhpub.com/2017-06-jun/online/html5/>

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## Coal fired plants

Tue, 2018-01-09 00:31 — barthollis



I find this discussion of coal fired power plants interesting as I retired from a company providing services to the plant here where I live. The town would not let the railroad take land for a siding, so all the coal came by truck.



I drove one of these trucks for 8 1/2 years, going from the yard shown here to the mine, 32 miles away. I loaded 22 tons in each of the trailers and brought it to the power plant where I would dump it into an bin in the ground. It would go from that bin, by belt, to a silo that held the coal and fed it, again by belt, to the crusher where it was pulverized and burned. We ran 5 trucks on the day shift, and 4 trucks at night.

The mine served a rail line where unit trains were loaded. It was interesting to see Santa Fe units in the mix when the merger first happened.

Bart

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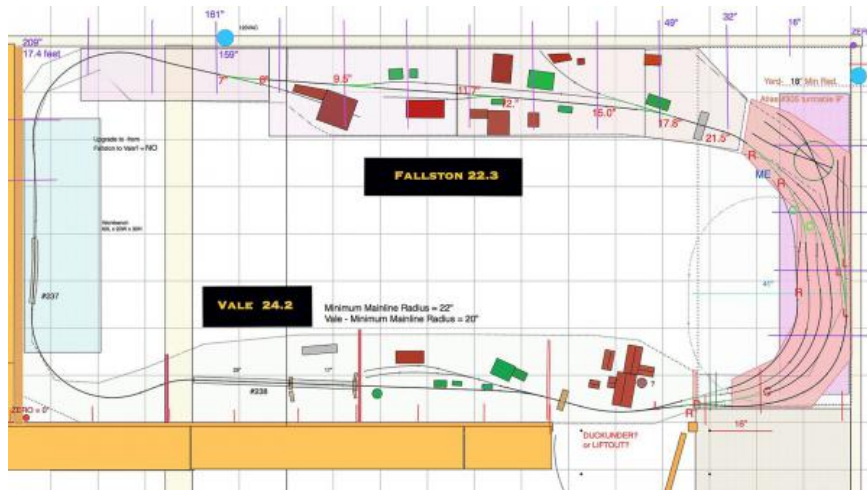
## Ma & Pa One+ town plan!

Tue, 2018-01-09 06:01 — Art Kuperstein

Sorry. Had some trouble loading this quick feasibility plan into prior post. Each town has depot, team track, general freight, cannery, milk platforms. Fallston has coal dealer, lumber/bldg materials as well. Offers operation with large spectrum of 1940's era cars. The run - through staging/fiddle yard and turntable is constricted, but hopefully will work well enough. Squares are one foot.

Cheers,

Art



Art Kuperstein

MPPRRHS Editor - TIMETABLE quarterly

M&PRR c.1949 ...for now

Langhorne, Pa

Ma & Pa RR Website-

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## Art, I would suggest flipping

Tue, 2018-01-09 06:46 — Virginian and L...



Art, I would suggest flipping the layout 180 degrees along the long axis. Then your lift out would not have the ends of any turn outs on it. Looks like you will have a couple of nice signature scenes on the layout as well, and I would say you captured the spirit of the one town layout very well, call it one metro area, or one county, it still works well.

Rob in Texas

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# Lee -- One "town?"

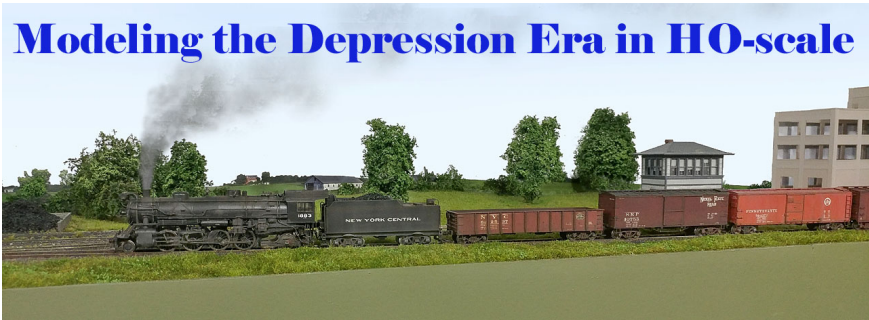
Tue, 2018-01-09 09:04 — James Six

Lee,

From my perspective it would be treated essentially the same way as a one-town layout. With my layout, I could say that each side of the layout is a different town that are almost butted up against each other. Then my layout would be much like yours.

The key here is that whether it is two or three towns very close together (no make believe distance between then) or one town spread out as is my layout's one town, . . . they are the same.

Jim Six



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### More/Bigger is not always better

Tue, 2018-01-09 10:58 — James Six

Fitting right in with the one-town layout concept is that IMO "more/bigger" is rarely better. This hobby has a real problem in believing that larger layouts are best. Personally, I have rarely seen a large layout that I would want to have. Most are all track with too many trains. Frankly, there is not much that is realistic about them. And, I have never seem a large layout that is anyway near what I would call complete. So, can bigger really be better?

At the other extreme is the small layout builder. I have seen many of these and a serious percent of them are really high quality. One-town layouts typically fall into this category. Along with this, it should be apparent to all of us that there are far more modelers who have small layouts than large layouts. So then, why are large layouts and large layout builders treated like the "gods" of our hobby???

The Unites States Marine Corp. had a television commercial many years ago that stated that the "Marines want a few good men" and left it to the viewer to add . . . "as compared to an Army of not so good men". I see our hobby in a very similar way. I would rather have models and a layout that are smaller but of high quality than a large layout that is if insufficient quality. Of course each of us has out own quality standard -- as it should be.

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The above stated, I will be honest and admit that my layout falls into the "medium" size category vs. small.

Food for thought,

Jim Six



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## Right on, Jlm

Tue, 2018-01-09 12:11 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

There were a couple of HUGE layouts in RMC in 2017 that didn't seem to be conducive to the type of operation that has been discussed here. I always call those layouts that fill the basement a "club" layout since they always seem to require several people not only to operate but also to maintain.

I learned about spontaneous combustion of coal from a brakeman while riding a yard job that switched a coal fired power plant with a coal trestle here in town in the Penn Central era. We didn't learn that in Chemistry 101 which I was studying at the same time!

Robert

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## Depends

Tue, 2018-01-09 12:55 — dave1905

Depends on your focus and what you like.

For example I have a larger layout. Why? Because i want to have the crews experience something like a trip. They will get their engines, get on their train, run across a territory, have to use the timetable and train orders, do work along the way and then get to the other end, yard their train and take the power to the house. I felt very incomplete just starting in a staging yard, running to someplace, then going to a staging yard.

Its like the difference between a dispatcher's or through freight perspective vs. an agent, operator or switch crew perspective. I can't really think of a time when my scope working for railroad was confined to "one town". We used to call it the "network perspective". A decision I made about Laredo, TX will affect what happens in Chicago three days later.

That it the hardest point to get across in TT&TO. Before an extra leaves its origin, the dispatcher has to plan where or how its going to meet every other opposing extra operating, and if he's good, he'll have made allowances for the extras that are planned to run in the next couple hours.

I often work a switch engine when I operate on a larger railroad, but its a different feel than the "one town" concept, because you still have to mesh with the larger operation. If I don't put the right cars on the right train, then the next session they won't have cars to switch at a station down line and the session after that things will get doubled up.

Having "one town" is a valid modeling perspective, but then again so is "one trip".

Dave Husman

Modeling the Wilmington & Northern Branch in 1900-1905

Iron men and wooden cars.

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## I think the key to layout



Tue, 2018-01-09 13:40 — Virginian and L...

I think the key to layout building is intelligent design more than size. I have seen layouts of all sizes I found unappealing because of things that were built into them more than their size.

Some examples:

Too much track, in many cases the layout has so much track crammed together there seems to be no use for it and no logical reason for it to be there. It then looks like a bowl of pasta.

Every location is a switching puzzle, real railroads would try to avoid these issues whenever possible and would try and make the exchange of freight cars as easy as possible. Some cases would require complicated track work but not all of them. Usually the logic is "I did not want the switch crew to be bored". Instead they are frustrated and unlikely to return as trying to do everything the hard way is not really fun.

Insincere track scenes. Having the track pass through the same scene more than once for no reason than to add length to the run. This happens a lot in layouts with industries up the hill from the tracks. Unless there is a good reason to go up the hill the railroad would let the coal or other material slide down the hill in a chute or conveyor. If there are town industries that don't warrant lots of carloads the freight would likely be available on a lower level team track.

Industries that are too small to handle a freight cars worth of material. These just destroy realism to me.

Track work that is hard to access and maintain. Many times turn outs are located at the back edge of the layout instead of the front. This requires lots of reaching in to fix issues with mechanical things like turn outs, and electrical issues with drops to power buses.

Reliance on picks to uncouple and then placing structures and or scenery between the operator and the location the car needs to uncouple from or needs to couple. There are reliable means for remote uncoupling for places like this. Longer leads and broader curves will help solve many of these issues allowing for room to do the things that need doing.

The wrong size. This can be either too big or too small to accomplish the vision of the layout builder. Make sure there is space to build what is desired in an intelligent fashion. If the space can not be increased to accommodate the railroad the railroad needs to be scaled back to fit the space instead of too much compression. On the other hand if a lot of space is available and it is more than is needed to meet the desires of the layout builder do not decide to fill it with things that later just become headaches to maintain and add nothing to the enjoyment of the railroad.

No unifying theme. In many cases the builder tries to add so many things that do not go together it destroys the illusion of realism and never will make sense no matter how well executed it is.

No versatility. Many folks say that a point to point is the only way to go. There are some that are truly point to point but most have end to end connections with another railroad or would run beyond the small section that is being modeled. If an option for continuous running is available and one wants to watch trains run it is available. Sometimes this is very therapeutic and relaxing. Other times the owner is by himself and wants to run the railroad. He should be able to enjoy this by himself as well as when the crew arrives for a full blown operating session.

Fast clocks to me are the single biggest destroyers of realism. Instead of trying to represent 100 miles of mainline and doing it poorly represent 10 miles or less and do it well. Less compression means more time for the modeled area and things happen in real time. Things can be enjoyed instead of survived.

Train length is too short. Another spoiler of realism for me is the train that is a caricature of its full size counter part. Now I know there are places that had 12 car trains and typically they quickly fell to the trucking industry in most cases. If one is modeling a place that had several freight trains either running through or doing work in the town try and replicate them with out too much compression. If for example the prototype was running 75 car trains maybe compress to 20 to 30 cars if need be it will still have more of the feel of the real thing and actually look like it might produce a profit.

Just my thoughts on things to watch for when designing your layout. Remember it is your railroad make it fit your dream and make sure your dream can fit your space.

Rob in Texas

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Rob -- I think the key to layout

Tue, 2018-01-09 14:34 — James Six

WOW!!! I could not have said it better! My sentiments exactly.

Along with too much track goes to many operators. The big layouts I am familiar with need from a dozen to two dozen operators. Frankly, I would not allow that many people in my train room even if I could. While I love people, I don't like them all that much!

LOL 😄

I know of many layouts that cannot be operated without at least a dozen people. Frankly, many times (most times) I just want to operate by myself. So, my layout is designed so that I can operate by myself. On the other hand, I enjoy operating with one, two, or maybe three others at most. My layout is designed for that. In fact, my layout can be operated with up to six guest operators, although that is pushing it for me. I do NOT like working in crowds and more than 5 or 6 people is a crowd to me.

As for track, I see too many layouts including some on this forum that have WAY TOO MUCH track. You can run trains on such layouts, but they certainly cannot be operated prototypically or realistically. But then, not everyone is into the prototype nor are they into realism. Different strokes.

But this does not explain why big layouts and big layout operators are treated like gods. 🙄

Jim



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## Bigger = better?

Tue, 2018-01-09 15:05 — p51



Fitting right in with the one-town layout concept is that IMO "more/bigger" is rarely better. This hobby has a real problem in believing that larger layouts are best. Personally, I have rarely seen a large layout that I would want to have. Most are all track with too many trains. Frankly, there is not much that is realistic about them. And, I have never seen a large layout that is anyway near what I would call complete. So, can bigger really be better?

I agree that many large layouts I've seen aren't finished. The classic I remember was one I saw on a tour about 2-3 years ago that only had track in a few spots, and otherwise looked like a massive lumber pile screwed together. Nowhere you could run trains at all. As I left the place on the tour, I asked the owner when he'd started construction, thinking he'd say within a few years. He replied that he'd started in the 1970s!



But let's be honest here; if you can devote the time and detail to a large layout, that's going to impress people all the more. You can run trains longer, as well.

The magazines are always going to gravitate to the larger layouts when they can. Let's face it; well-done large layouts are impressive for their scope.

The issue that is hindering the hobby, I feel, is that after seeing so many 'basement filler' layouts in magazines, people looking to move ahead in the hobby are going to either realize they either don't have the room for that and if they did, would never complete a decent-looking (and running) layout that big within their lifetime. This is why I think there are so many more layouts in Europe and the UK, as the magazines usually cover the small layouts (tiny by US standards) that most people there have. That influences others who look at them to think, "Blimey, I can do that, right proper," as the hobby is generally self-perpetuating in that regard.

Once the magazines start showing the merits of smaller layouts (many of which are far better detailed as it's easier to focus on a small area), then more people will see them and think, "Hey, why can't I do that?" That's what happened to me; I

started reading British model train magazines and seeing their small layouts. I suggest that for anyone in the hobby, to see magazines you normally wouldn't read as the UK/EU magazines have some 'out of the box' thinking compared to how we do it on this side of the pond.

But the bottom line is that small layouts aren't better, but they are more realistic and can provide the owner with far more satisfaction in the build and in the later details.

They're also a lot easier to troubleshoot if something goes wrong!

As for Jim's comments on not wanting a couple dozen people in your layout, I agree. I can run my layout with 3 people max and the third will spend some time sitting around for the other two. I know of guys with large layouts who say they can't run their own layout alone. To me, that's very sad. I love sharing my layout with others, but not so many that they'd need nametags and they could come, run, and then leave without me ever meeting them (I know of a nice local guy with a massive N scale layout who told me that). Nope, count me out if that's what it takes!

**LEE**



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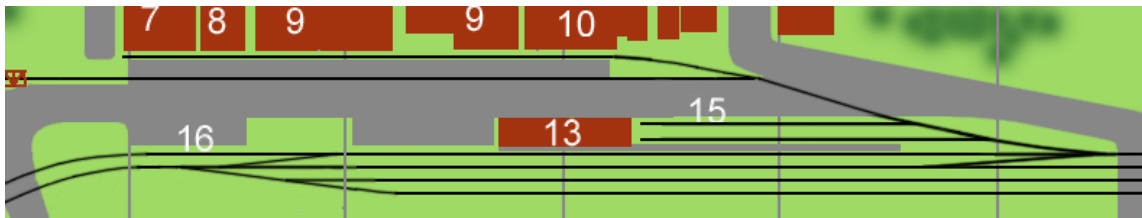
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## Modeling certain types of scenes

Tue, 2018-01-09 14:47 — James Six

This is the kind of scene that I am trying to create with the part of my track plan shown below,





I doubt that you would find such a setting in modern railroading. While it was common in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, it is not long gone for many years now.

Jim Six

## Modeling the Depression Era in HO-scale



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## James, thanks for the kind

Tue, 2018-01-09 14:59 — Virginian and L...

James, thanks for the kind words.



I think the roots of the big layouts being so highly favored came from the times when we had to build almost everything. The fact that something like that was built and the train could go on a long run was huge to the folks that had a dog bone in a room. Many of them were the source of inspiration in their day and really impressed the lone wolf crowd. Also there were the clubs that might have 50 or more members and at least 10 guys with lots of skill. Those guys had the resources and labor to afford and do the big ones and had to accommodate a crowd. So by comparison it had the wow factor to the lone wolf guy who knew he could not do it but still admired it.

For many folks your layout would be considered large. I on the other hand think it is the right size for the goals you have. You made your dream fit the space and used the space to build the dream. To me that is the most important. For some the right size could be a garage size or bigger and for others a 2 foot by 12 or 16 foot will be huge and more than enough. I think more important than small size is right size and for many that is hard for them to figure out.

James as to your post above, I recall lots of scenes like that even into the 60s and early 70s. By then much of the industry was in decline and the places were getting less and less rail service as they were shutting down and moving out. In the late 70s early 80s the areas were being abandoned by the railroads and soon the rails came up and later they became the savior of some folks the jogging and bike trails. For me I would rather have the mills and the lively hoods that went with them. The town also lost a huge amount of population dropping from 70,000 or so to 20,000 or so. Not the type of progress one would like to see, prosperity left and ain't comin back.

Rob in Texas

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## Heresy!

Tue, 2018-01-09 15:26 — umauma railway

Rob;

Ill preface that I've never used a fast clock but have measured the time between my stations with the idea of implementing a timetable. The idea that a train moving at 15 mph between towns in 30 second is just doesn't feel right. Scale miles (smiles) based on a 12:1 time now can be written as 6 minutes or 1-1/2 miles. Yes longer distance between towns are ideal but there were stations that close on Hawaii island.

Now if you have the space as Jim proposes a 1:1 clock may be appropriate (or 1-1/2 or 2:1). A clock is essential for timetable operation even if all trains are extras.

Neil Erickson, Umauma, HI

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## Neil -- Heresy!

Tue, 2018-01-09 15:34 — James Six

With a one-town layout you don't have to be concerned with time between towns!



Jim



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### "Let's face it; well-done

Tue, 2018-01-09 16:22 — ctxmf74

*"Let's face it; well-done large layouts are impressive for their scope."*

or they could be a sad result of a life spent toiling alone in a basement? Unless one has the money to hire all the work out a large layout takes many many hours that might have been spent living in the real world,so they might not be all that impressive to many folks? A well done large club layout is another story though( although I see few club layouts that I'd consider "well done" The Tehachapi layout ar San Diego being one of few).....DaveB



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## One does not need to toil

Tue, 2018-01-09 16:35 — Virginian and L...

One does not need to toil alone to build a home layout although many do. I would consider hobby time spent away from others enjoyable time as is time spent with others. Getting into the real world happens at work and many other places. Hobby time is hobby time and if it takes years to complete it takes years to complete, that does not mean the individual did not enjoy the time spent. If you are about the end result that might not be for you but if it is a journey and not a destination then you might have found that all the time was time you enjoyed. Lots of things are done alone, like reading a book, the web, television, etc. One can replace some of them with model railroading and still be happy. Look at all those people that take up jogging and run for an hour and get nowhere, the only thing they have to show for it is worn out joints and sweaty clothes, but they enjoy it.



Rob in Texas

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## Switchbacks?

Tue, 2018-01-09 16:49 — donm

Jim --

Appreciate the philosophy behind your layout design and the desire to replicate the prototype track arrangement as nearly as possible. However, the furniture/grain/packing side of the layout contains a double switchback arrangement for counter clockwise trains to serve that area.

If so desired, it could be cured by reversing the direction of the crossover in front of the left side of the grain-coal-lumber building.

Don Mitchell



<http://mrhmag.com/blog/donm>

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## Don -- Switchbacks?

Tue, 2018-01-09 16:58 — James Six

I considered that at one time and am thinking about it again Don. Not sure what I will do. The reason it is the way I have it now is because that is what my operating crews requested. Problem is, they are used to operating on large layouts with time tables and fast clock. This means they have to hurry at doing everything. My layout makes them have to slow down and I am not sure they like that. Going forward my feeling is that they will do it my way or they can go operate elsewhere.

LOL 😄

Jim



## Re: Don -- Switchbacks?

Tue, 2018-01-09 17:32 — donm

One belief I hold is that, "Prototype railroads are built for profit or public purpose; model railroads are built for entertainment." So, consider how the operational desires of you and your crew match the proto operations on the given trackwork. My guess is that there will be more trains more frequently on the layout than on the prototype.

Perhaps "Different strokes for different folks" should be added. There is a rather large difference in the operating desires of the crews on my club's Tehachapi layout, which features hard core TTTO proto ops, and those on my home SMR layout, which features extensive, but more casual, switching ops.

If you and your crew believe the present arrangement will provide the best entertainment, then by all means keep the track as is.

Don Mitchell



<http://mrhmag.com/blog/donm>

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## Keys to a layout

Tue, 2018-01-09 17:43 — Don Hanley

Rob



You really hit the nail on the head with your thoughts. Your first sentence encapsulates what is missing with most layouts; the lack of intelligent design. No I don't mean modelers are dumb, rather many have almost no understanding about railroad engineering, and design economics. I have a civil engineering degree from Purdue University, I spent 33 years inspecting, surveying, designing storm and sanitary sewer projects, and project management of municipal utility works and highway construction. I would be the last person to tell you I understand railroad engineering.

What I can do is to look at Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, Valuation maps, old photographs, and other information and see what the railroad did in that particular situation. I then can take that information and modify it to fit my available space.

I think one of the keys to having retention within the hobby is to get new modelers to slow down, determine what they like, and then develop a plan to achieve those goals.

As far as large layouts, if done well they can be a blast to operate. I have a friend and operate on his layout on a regular basis. His layout is full blown with CTC, dispatching, and fast clock. It's set in Denver circa 1952-55. With the many local switching jobs. Denver Union station is a hub of activity with passenger trains arriving and departing. Through freights as well as freights that originate and terminate at the D&RGW's 7th street yard and to the mix.

What makes this layout work? The layout has great scenery, it basically follows the D&RGW track alignment in Denver, modified to fit the space available. He has also has taken the time to make sure the layout track work and rolling stock work flawlessly.

Would I want to build and maintain the layout that he has, no. Do I admire and appreciate what he has done and enjoy operating on it....you bet I do.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## Ma & Pa plan flip...

Tue, 2018-01-09 18:59 — Art Kuperstein

Thanks for the idea Rob, but I have already started construction and I wanted to preserve Left is North as well. The liftout is North of Vale. A trial of turnout placement on the farm liftout is working well.....so far.!

I appreciate your comments on the signature scenes, for that is what I tried to incorporate as I followed the original Ma & Pa RR 1918 track maps as best as I could.

Cheers,

Art

Art Kuperstein

MPPRRHS Editor - TIMETABLE quarterly

M&PRR c.1949

Langhorne, Pa

Ma & Pa RR Website-

<http://maparr.weebly.com>

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## Large Layout Maintenance

Tue, 2018-01-09 19:27 — JackM

There is a well known modeler that lives about a block from me. He has traveled the country and operated some very well know, magazine covered (or over covered in one case) layouts. Surprisingly, according to him they did not operate that well, derailments, stalls, etc. The more turn outs, especially hard to reach, the more problems you are asking for. Anytime I have to touch a locomotive on my layout it causes frustration. My next layout is going to be bullet proof, even if I have to take it down to one turnout. Well that may be an extreme but you get the idea.

Jack

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## The idea of using the space

Tue, 2018-01-09 19:40 — Douglas Meyer

The idea of using the space available to model one location well allowing for larger/longer/bigger sidings and structures and what have you vs putting in as much as can be squeezed in is interesting. And it allows for a closer representation of what the prototype does. This tends result in simpler but more typical track arrangements.

People often design layouts like they are switching puzzles but the prototype tries as much as possible to simplify switching to save time and money. Adding in a tendency to try and get as much in as possible and the track planes get very complicated fast. To the point that what is supposed to be a small branch line has track more densely packed and complicated then New York City. This results in both a decrease in believability as well as an increase in frustration of some operators.

So one town layouts have advantages, And in truth a lot of these advantages can be applied to larger layouts as well. Which is why I am following this thread.

Is it for everyone no but to each there own.

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## Jack m



Tue, 2018-01-09 22:17 — Virginian and L...

For reliable running one needs good track and rolling stock. One will not make up for the other. One must develop a set of standards and stick to them. If your cars are all going to be heavier than the nmra standard then they all should be. Wheels need to be right as do trucks and couplers. Locomotives need to be up to standards as well. If they are not do not put them on the layout. When building track if your design is for 36 or 42 or 30 inch radius a 26 inch radius in one spot is not ok. Kinks in track should not be there. One needs to take the time to sand the road bed before putting the track down. There need to be gaps for expansion and contraction. Rail joiners might be fine for short term layouts to carry power. Our layouts age is measured in decades and that is not a good idea they fail over time even if soldered. I know this to be true. When they do fail they will be a bother to find and fix. All curves must be considered horizontal as well as vertical. Take your time do it right and you will be able to turn on the train and let it run while doing something else. I have had visitors that are on a tour of the layouts at my club ask me while we are at one of the other layouts ask me who is watching your coal train and I say no one. They then quickly look at their watch and say it has been running for 2 hours and no one is watching it? Yes and no reason it should not keep running, and we continue looking at things and answering questions.

Rob in Texas

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

- [Layout design](#)

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Even though I could have

Tue, 2018-01-09 22:26 — BOK

Even though I could have filled my condo basement with track I chose to instead built a realistic, simple, around the walls railroad which was easy to build, maintain, and operate. The older I get the less hassle i want to go through to enjoy the hobby and I also want it to be easy for my heirs to remove.

I'll try to get a sketch of it posted here in a couple of days.

Barry

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## Doug you have hit on my

Tue, 2018-01-09 22:48 — Virginian and L...



Doug you have hit on my interest in the one town idea. For me it is more one metropolitan area since it will be part of two towns that but up to each other. Now I will not be modeling all of the larger town but it will consist of a bit less than 10 actual miles of track and what is near the track. Also so I can fit it into a linear space there will be some liberties taken so the flavor can be captured if not an actual recreation. Even so I expect it to be a large layout with lots of staging. One of my goals is to not touch my cars for anything other than maintenance so I will need space for a few maybe more than a few hundred pieces of rolling stock. Cars will be detailed more than the shake the box kits in most cases because that is what I build.

In the real world in the time or just prior to my time there were ten steel mills in town so that will take a lot of space. There was also a very large coal mine that has since been legislated out of business, there is several hundred years worth of high grade bituminous in the ground. there are many smaller ones that went the same way. There used to be three glass factories, several jobbers, wholesale grocers, tobacco plants, a tile plant, a china factory, breweries, meat packer, and a paper mill. That is just the larger industries there were many smaller ones that were still rail served as well as the three LCL freight houses and the warehouse district.

So even one town can take a lot of space and is such that half a dozen or more could operate comfortably with out making life difficult for each other. If I follow my design it would still be fun for someone to take one job and do it and then do the next on down the line. since I am planning on either continuous connections through staging or reversing loops at each end with staging if I just want to turn on some trains and watch them run I would be able to do that as well. I am planning on a large but easy to maintain layout due to quality methods of construction and easy access for maintenance.

If it turns out I don't get to build this I might just build one large steel mill the yard and what ever else I have space for. I already have the structures for the engine terminal and the steel mills and the rolling stock with about 1/3 rd built, I also have nearly all the locomotives I am likely to buy except for just a few if they become available. I have been collecting the pieces for this over the years and fortunately made very few false steps.

So until I make my last move and build my space for the train layout I will run my equipment on the club layout. When I get to build the layout I do not care if I am done or not for me the journey is the fun part and the destination is only one part of it.

Rob in Texas

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- [The Santa Fe Chief at Carquinez Club](#)
- [Siskiyou Line dismantling underway again](#)
- [Whoa !!! It's sort of starting to look like something.](#)

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## Single town and complexity

Tue, 2018-01-09 23:23 — renegourley

I know I'm missing the OP's point here, but the English have been modelling single-town railways since time immemorial. They've been doing it so long they don't even know there's anything else! Witness Redford ([https://youtu.be/Ci6TSd\\_jvRI](https://youtu.be/Ci6TSd_jvRI)) to see a huge layout that is nevertheless a single town. The visible portion is about 1/3 of the layout. It is mostly staging.

More on point, my Pembroke is a single town layout. No ops sessions yet.

cheers,

Rene

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## Rene it does not sound like

Tue, 2018-01-09 23:57 — Virginian and L...



Rene it does not sound like you missed the point but you might be ahead of the curve.

Rob in Texas

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## Bluffton, In

Wed, 2018-01-10 04:27 — redP



I would love to see that Don. I lived Just north of Bluffton in Ossian when I worked for the NS out of Fort Wayne.

I came across some info a while ago about the Kingsland siding which was between Bluffton And Ossian. There was a very bad head on collusion between 2 interurbans the only survivor was a Bluffton woman. I think it happened around 1911. Anyway a little bit of railroad history about the area.

PC/Amtrak in east central Indiana 1972

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## Intelligent Design

Wed, 2018-01-10 04:49 — redP



"Your first sentence encapsulates what is missing with most layouts; the lack of intelligent design."

I agree 100% I have seen many track plans I thought were totally stupid. Here are a few things to consider.

1. Railroads do not like curves
2. With the high cost of cutting in a turnout and maintaining it, they like to have as few as possible.
3. Railroads dont like to spend money.

The point is Railroads dont put track in because it looks cool. At todays prices the cost of track is about a million dollars a mile

PC/Amtrak in east central Indiana 1972

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## RedP

Wed, 2018-01-10 05:09 — Wabash Banks

Red,

I'm fron Anderson and you have some cool modeling potential in Bluffton! I visited Ouabache SP and drove through Bluffton to check out the town. The area south of Almoc Steel would make a fantastic switcher, even if a historical version needed to be used when more businesses were served by rail. Certainly a reasonable one town layout option!

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## RedP

Wed, 2018-01-10 05:12 — WANDRR

I grew up in New Haven. I'd love to hear more stories about the railroads in/around Ft. Wayne.

TJ R.

Mobile, AL (Originally from New Haven, IN)

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## New Haven

Wed, 2018-01-10 05:26 — redP

Do you remember the old Falstaff Brewery? Back in the day the conductor would save Falstaff for the last switch of the day. If you gave them a good switch, they would throw a couple of cases of beer on your caboose.

PC/Amtrak in east central Indiana 1972

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## I sure do!

Wed, 2018-01-10 05:38 — WANDRR

For anyone whose never been around a brewery, it has a very unique aroma.

TJ R.

Mobile, AL (Originally from New Haven, IN)

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Red I think that is the most

Wed, 2018-01-10 06:23 — Virginian and L...

Red I think that is the most important part of the plan. By intelligent design I think even if free lancing track plans one still needs to remember what it is that the railroad does. That is to move goods as cheaply as possible from one location to another.

Our club layout is what many would consider large. It was designed primarily as a layout to allow continuous running for open houses. The operations aspect was not considered when it was designed. Neither was a unifying theme. It was designed prior to my joining the club and in fact was designed before the club adopted dcc as I understand. One thing that happened was scenic features were designed. One guy wanted a yard, another wanted a big passenger terminal, then a loop track was designed to go around the yard. Grades were put into the layout cause we needed to go up and down hills. One of the peninsulas was designed with the idea of tracks that were dual separating and crossing over each other. It was then decided we needed a logging area and narrow gauge. One guy likes museums so we have three. One guy wanted a big trestle so we have one of those. Another guy wanted a big mountain so we have one of those.



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In short it was not placed on a map and given a reason for being. It was in fact given lots of scenic features that trains run through. Visitors are really impressed with it. So are several modelers. There have been lots of changes to increase staging, finish some areas, improve others and make yards working as well as staging yards accessible. Many of these are in planning stages.

Now there were some very intelligent things done. Aisles were wide enough so the operators can pass each other easily with most being between 36 and 42 inches. Track centers were very generous so hands could get into the area. Nothing sideswipes anything unless the train is parked past the clearance point on a diverging track. In many areas quality construction was used for all things involved.

So like all things in a club there were compromises made and things were done over time by various members who all had different visions of what should be on a layout.

Now am I unhappy with the layout, no I am not. It is a great place to run trains. I can get some groans from the guys when I get one of my monster trains on the layout and the dispatcher goes crazy because it occupies so many blocks. If I was king and we were starting from scratch would I do the same thing, not a chance.

First Thing I would do was place it on a map. Next I would find someplace that had the features we wanted and model a short section of the route that goes through the area. It is a big layout but not big enough to model a division of a real railroad. Instead I would use the one town concept to be one area and maybe represent no more than 20 miles of main line. I would have much more staging than we do now. I would have the staging areas separate from the visible areas and possibly go with a two level layout for the areas that are modeled with scenery and add two levels of staging one above and one below so trains can be stored between trips over the layout and members can have a place to park trains that might not fit a given operating situation. Yards and sidings would then remain operational and not be used to house yard queens that never polish the rails.

Wow I talked a lot.

To sum up, the most important part for a railroad is to get it on a map, until then free lanced or other wise you will not know what it will do. Next model a piece of it that fits your space with out compressing it too much. Once those two things are done you are on the way to intelligent design.

Rob in Texas

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## @ Rob

Wed, 2018-01-10 06:45 — redP

I have nothing against freelancers even though I am a prototype modeler. There are two important questions neither of which has a right or wrong answer. First, why is it here? Second what are we doing?

PC/Amtrak in east central Indiana 1972

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## Falstaff Brewery

Wed, 2018-01-10 07:07 — Don Hanley

Red It's interesting that you mentioned Falstaff Brewery. It was originally Bergoff Brewery which was painted on the brick on the Grant St side of the building. It was very faded. I don't know when Falstaff took over, but its the only name I remember growing up.

When I was employed by the City we had a project where we rebuilt the railroad crossings on Washington St. Timing was critical and we had 2 days to remove the old track, put in the new track, and NS would not authorize overtime for the track crew.

The local delivered two hopper cars to the brewery and then the section gang immediately began removing the old track and ballast. We discovered that there was a concrete mud slab under the ties and with the new grade alignments it was 2"-3" to low depending on where you measured it. To solve the problem we got a small paver and laid asphalt over the slab



to bring it up to the proper elevation for the new grades. The section crew had just finished bolting up the last of the track panels when the local arrived with two more loaded hoppers. The making of beer was uninterrupted.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## club layouts

Wed, 2018-01-10 08:46 — James Six

I have nothing to do with club layouts. I want it all my way. I will make compromises with myself but not with other people who have different interests. I don't want mountains, grades, a big yard, big passenger terminal, logging facility, narrow gauge, a desert scene, water front, a circus, the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern, AMTRAK, CSX, and Conrail all on the layout at the same time. Lord, NO. I would scream!!! I would find a different hobby! I don't have zero interest in such a layout, my interest is negative infinity!!!!!!!

I want what I want and am willing to have a smaller layout in order to have it "my way". I am fortunate in that I love local trains and have little interest in running long, through trains from one town to the next -- especially when the locomotive arrives at the next town the caboose is back in the previous. I don't need a game-like fast clock. I operate in real time. "Real" as in realistic. While my layout may not be as large as Tony Koester's or Bill Darnaby's layouts, it will allow me to do all that I want and need and do. If I never complete the other side of my layout and have to live with what I now have, so be it. I will be both happy and content.

I started this blog and am making sure that it keeps going mainly for the guys and gals who want a layout but don't have the space for a large layout. Yes, the blog is for everyone interested because there is much to be learned about small layouts and small layout operation that can be incorporated in larger layouts. A larger layout can have two, three, of more towns. I believe that the one-town layout concept will help a lot of people and want to keep us focused there.

Something I am not sure everyone has grasped yet is that having one town does not mean you have to model the entire town. Not hardly. Most of the town can be "implied". It's on the other side of the backdrop (wall). You only need to model the part of the town that the railroad interacts with. Look at Bill Darnaby's Maumee layout. Bill models on a shelf that is mostly 6" to 8" wide. Bill tells us to not waste time and resources modeling things that really don't affect the railroad and are not needed to operate the railroad.

Many model railroaders just like to run trains. The more of them and the longer they are the better. That will never work for the small layout owner -- or me. We simply do not have the space for it. Many of us don't have the resources either. This hobby ain't cheap. More power to the folks who do, but that ain't us (small layout folk). Because of this we need to be much more focused on the operation of our layouts. The one-town layout can be designed with this in mind and we will end up with years of enjoyment and satisfaction with our layouts.

I will walk away from the podium now. Please don't hate me.

Jim Six 😊



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## Club vs private layouts

Wed, 2018-01-10 09:08 — umauma railway

I too have been a member of a good club that had members who spanned the gamut of skill levels. It was ultimately a horse designed by committee. Despite all the positives, I also want my railroad my way.

Would I participate in a modular group if one was nearby? Yes. The social aspects alone support our hunger to model and, sometimes, go places that I wouldn't normally consider modeling whether Scale, era, or local.

This thread has really opened my eyes to more realistic representation of a railroad town/station despite how much space is available. If I had the room, time, and expendable \$\$ then, yes, I'd build a layout as large as that done by Michael Rose. I would also want room for staging and some automation to allow passenger and freight trains to run through, even drop blocks of cars if possible, so I could focus on the lowly freight / peddler.

This thread on one town could be a primer on how one towns are managed by the railroad. It certainly doesn't mean to push only one town layouts. I get that. For most of us, going somewhere virtually is a great art and part of the appeal to building a model railroad. A little fantasy world where I travel on my own, still a child within.

Neil Erickson, Umauma, HI

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## Neil -- Club vs private layouts

Wed, 2018-01-10 09:11 — James Six

AMEN !!! 😊

Jim



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## Club layouts?

Wed, 2018-01-10 10:45 — ctxmf74

I'd love to join a club that was building a nice focused prototype layout but almost all clubs end up a dogs breakfast of eras ,locations, and quality of modeling. Other than the San Diego Tehachapi layout does anyone know of clubs modeling a specific prototype location? .....DaveB



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## Yes, I do...

Wed, 2018-01-10 11:07 — RSeiler

I belong to a club modeling the Cincinnati-Northern railroad, very prototypically, and we operate.

<https://cincinnatinorthernrr.wordpress.com/>



I used to belong to a club exactly as Jim described above too, right down to the circus. Wasn't my thing.

Randy

*B&O/PC Cincinnati West, Summer 1975*

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## Prototype Location Clubs?



Wed, 2018-01-10 11:14 — Grenzer47

The one that comes to my mind in the the NEB&W, the Berkshire Lines at Troy, NY. While the railroad itself is a freelance composite of D&H and Rutland, the towns and scenery are all prototype based on actual sites along those railroads. Their model of Troy itself is stunning, the best urban modeling I think I've ever seen. Their facebook page is amazing.

Barry P.

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## Club Layouts



Wed, 2018-01-10 11:29 — Don Hanley

Jim

I think we can say that we want it all our way. It's human nature. That being said there is probably not another soul out there that wants their layout the same way that I want mine. I make compromises for what I want, you make compromises for what you want, and they make compromises for what they want. Some like the big club layouts with the variety of personalities, others like yourself do not and that's OK.

It is our capacity to listen to other who have a view point that we may not agree with and still have a civil conversation that makes us the better person. As I mentioned in a previous post I have a good friend who's layout rather large. He has CTC, dispatching, and a fast clock, and its a blast to operate. Do I want it for myself no. Even if I had the space available I doubt that I would build a layout as extensive as his. Does the siren call of the large layout beacon me from time to time. I would be a liar to say it doesn't. Discipline is what keeps me in check.

All of that being said this blog is organic and it will take twists and turns that none of us who were here from the start can anticipate. I believe the genius of this blog is that it encourages others to express their ideas and make comments of ideas presented. The overall goal should be to help those with medium to small space for a layout develop a track plan that will keep them interested for years to come.

I believe that the one town approach to layout design is as revolutionary as the MRH TOMA concept, and that the one town approach (TOTA) is a natural extension of TOMA.

OK I will step down off my soapbox.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

- [Layout design](#)

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concept and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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

@Gary

Wed, 2018-01-10 11:56 — captpete

Yes, there are many early (and late) models of steam loco's in N-Scale. I am still DC (I don't see the need for DCC on a small, one-town layout and can do without the expense - I build my own electronic throttles with inertia and braking and a centrally located speaker handles sound effects) so I search e-Bay. Same for rolling stock. On my branch and in my era I have a modern American and a modern Mogul as motive power. If I were to model either Elk River or Milaca (Esp. Elk River) I would need more loco's for mainline GN and NP use and they are available on e-Bay (Ten-Wheeler, Atlantic, Pacific, Consolidation, etc. and of course if you need switchers the Americans were used in addition to 0-4-0, 0-6-0, and 0-8-0's. Interestingly, if you take the pilot trucks off an early Mogul or Consolidation you have a heavy GN 0-6(or 8)-0 switcher (just change the tender). Some GN Pacifics were built from Moguls also.

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## Slice of the Pie

Wed, 2018-01-10 12:43 — Kriegwulfe



I see where folks have stated " intelligent layout planning " and I had to laugh. I am an uber noob to the model railroad hobby. I do not have any real experience with anything in the hobby and as such I find myself joining the ranks of the " foamer " mindset when layout planning. I am not throwing stones..its just a time when self realization rears it's ugly head. I really don't know how or why a real railroad does the things it does, I don't know why tracks are built like they are in various real life areas. I figure the only real thing I know is I don't know much..lol..

I have looked at my track plan and wondered if it had too much track for a 2' X 16' bent into a L shape. I have planned for 4 2' X 4' modules to be built in the TOMA concept, but like everything else things are subject to change, and it has and probably will evolve as I learn more. I want to model the mid 80's to mid 90's on the Houston Tx ship channel in the area of whats known as Buffalo Bayou and a little more east. The thing is there really isn't much of a town or communities in the area..just a crap ton of businesses. I want ground throws for my switches..I am not looking for loops and long trains..I want to switch out cars and have fun. I do not want switching puzzles and the problems I fear would crop up.

I see these huge layouts in all kinds of media these days and all I can think of is " wow, how is that thing operating ?". I understand it's my ignorance factor kicking into high gear..but I look at what I want to build and I am confident I can and will build it and have hours and hours of switching fun. I have an understanding it takes all kinds to form up this hobby we like so much..and I appreciate each and every one whom contributes or teaches me something. I just want a small part of mine to become a reality that I and the munchkins can appreciate. I like this idea of a " one town show " and I think it empowers some modelers to look outside of the box. The here and now says that for the small slice of the pie I am willing to build/enjoy, I embrace the idea it's not a huge ongoing project, that it has expectations that seem to me, reasonable for time, money, effort and the final bite, the joy.

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- [On this day, in 1804...](#)
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- [Scenic Sub Project Update 1 - Introduction](#)

## @jamessix -- Power Plant Cinders

Wed, 2018-01-10 14:31 — captpete

On the GN (and the NP at least in MN) Cinders were used as ballast on the mainlines, also it was used as freight/passenger platforms and yards. It would be transported from the Twin Cities or Duluth to where it was needed. You could have an occasional car spotted at the Power Plant for this.

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## More on servicing the power plant

Wed, 2018-01-10 15:43 — James Six

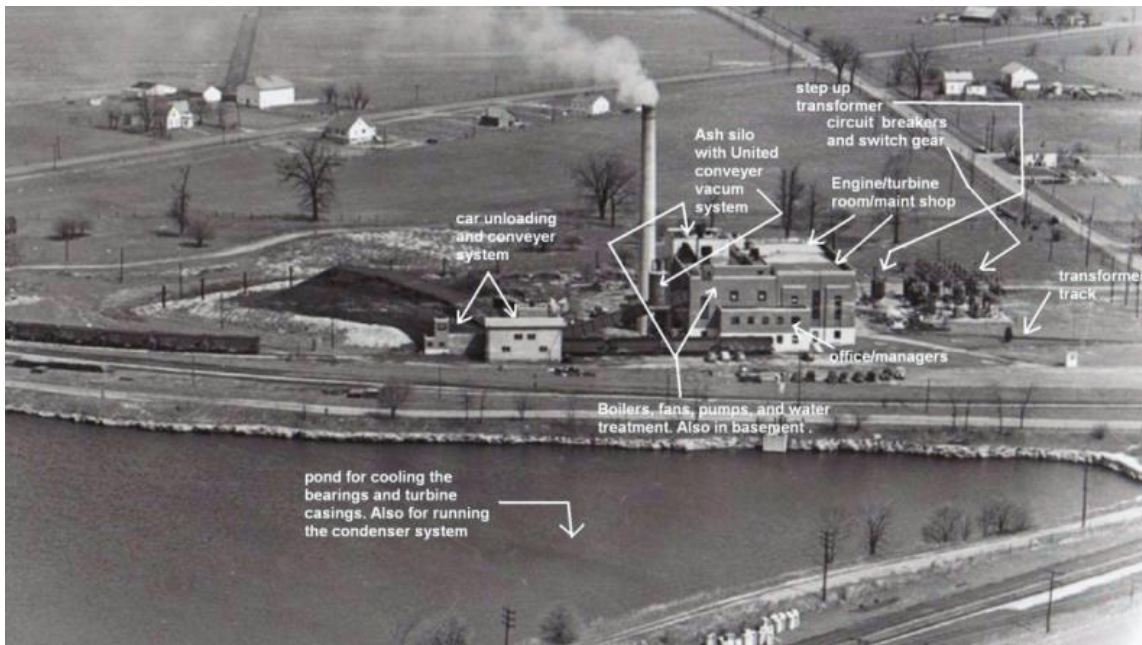
My friend Earl recently retired from the same utility that I worked at. He offered the following about my planned layout power plant.

*Quote: "One thing I think you should consider is that the powerhouse may consume or require eighteen carloads a day at full capacity, but, even the smallest powerhouse usually had on site coal reserves for thirty, sixty or ninety days to allow for weather, work stoppages ( at either the mine, railroad or the powerhouse by union workers ) ... My point is I don't think you'd have to have a specific number of cars in each train."*

Earl is exactly correct. These facts are the reason for the coal pile. It is the "buffer" that compensates for what Earl described. This will allow me to bring in trains of varying lengths just so the "average" train tonnage iw 900 tons of coal loads per day.

I hope that y'all have enjoyed and appreciate my calculations for determining coal usage bo the power plant.

Jim Six

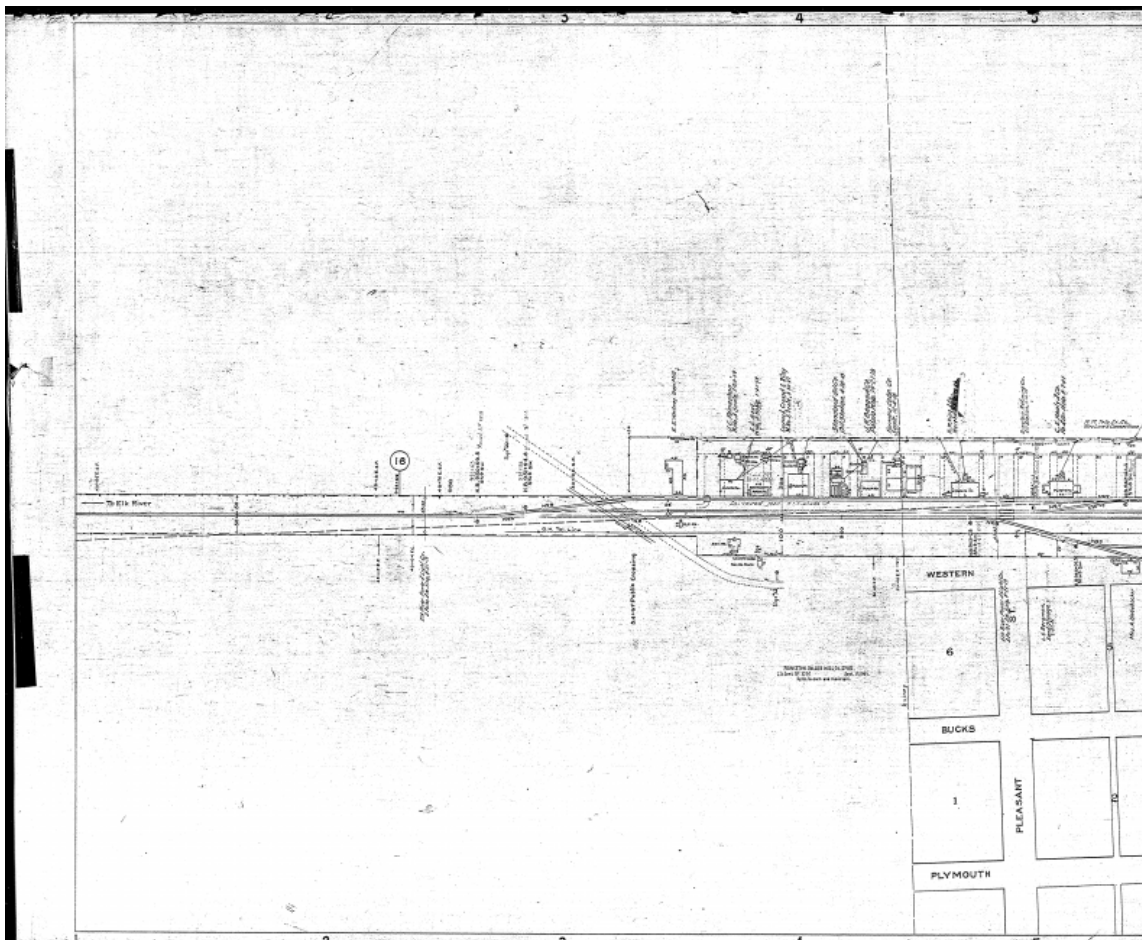


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## A look at operating Princeton, MN

Wed, 2018-01-10 15:58 — captpete

Here's my operating plan for my on-town layout, a branch line of the Great Northern running through it (below).



And here's a couple of timetables and stations on the Elk River -- Milaca line.

WESTWARD				SIXTH SUBDIVISION				EASTWARD			
Station Numbers	Car Capacity		SECOND CLASS		Distance from Elk River	Time Table No. 52. Effective April 25, 1943.  STATIONS	Telegraph Code	SIGNS	SECOND CLASS		
	Siding	Other Tracks	305	Daily Ex. Sun.					306	Daily Ex. Sun.	
G-28			L 8.52 <sub>am</sub>	0.00	ELK RIVER	ER	JRD NW	A 1.37 <sub>pm</sub>			
TRAINS BETWEEN N. P. RY. JCT. AND ELK RIVER WILL BE GOVERNED BY N. P. RY. TIME TABLE.											
			L 8.54 <sub>am</sub>	0.74	N. P. Ry. JCT.	WR	I	A 1.25 <sub>pm</sub>			
H-11	20		A 9.25	10.23	ZIMMERMAN			A 1.00			
H-20	47	98	A 10.05	19.16	PRINCETON	CT	DX	A 12.30			
H-24	3		A 10.20	23.36	LONG'S SIDING			A 12.10 <sub>pm</sub>			
H-29	16		A 10.38	28.58	PEASE	EA		A 11.55			
			A 10.50 <sub>am</sub>	32.56	MILACA JCT.		JP	L 11.40 <sub>am</sub>			
TRAINS BETWEEN MILACA JCT. AND MILACA WILL BE GOVERNED BY SECOND SUBDIVISION SCHEDULES.											
J-28			A 10.55 <sub>am</sub>	33.19	MILACA	MU	RDPB WX	L 11.35 <sub>am</sub>			
			1.66 18.4		Time Over Subdivision Average Speed Per Hour			1.48 18.1			

Employees Timetable April 1943 for the Elk River - Milaca line.

## STATIONS ON THE ELK RIVER-MILACA LINE

Station	Miles	Estab.	Disposition	Depot		
				Type	Size	Construction
Elk River	0.00	1864	BN	? C	? 20 x 100	? Frame
Junction-Line to Milaca/N. P. Railway Junction	0.74					
St. Paul Sand & Gravel	3.56	1969	BN			
Houltons Spur	3.69	1891-92	Abandoned 1961-62			
Fitzpatrick	7.53	1905	Abandoned 5-12/18			
Zimmerman	10.23	1886-88	BN	C Ext	24 x 24 24 x 24	Frame Frame
Princeton	19.16	1886-88	BN	C C	24 x 60 32 x 200	Frame Brick
Woodcock's Spur Brickton	21.99	1891	Renamed 7-9/02 Abandoned 6/30/32	? ?	8 x 12 ?	Frame ?
Long's Siding	23.36	1886-88	BN	? ?	8 x 12 12 x 34	Frame Portable Fram
Soule's Siding Pease	28.58	1886-88	Renamed 3/15/02 BN	? F C	8 x 34 8 x 12 24 x 48	Boxcar Body Frame Frame
Kolff's Spur	31	1891	Abandoned 1-9/95			
Milaca Junction	32.56	1886	BN			
Oak City Milaca	33.19	1882-83	Renamed 7/83-6/84 BN	? C C	? 24 x 84 32 x 112	? Frame Brick

As you can see there are 2 mixed trains a day. One from Elk River in the morning and one returning from Milaca later on. Assumption number 1 is that the morning train is made up in Elk River on the NP Team Track from the GN's and NP's Minneapolis-St. Cloud train; assumption number 2 is the the later train is made up at Milaca's Team Track (where there is a turntable to turn the locomotive), from the GN's St. Cloud-Brook Park line. Assumption number 3 is that the passenger coach and baggage car/combine is at the rear of the train. Any prototypical advice about this? Here's how I think it would go:

MIL	
305 Mixed Ex. Sun	M
7 15	1
7 38	2
7 48	2
8 15	3
8 30	3
8 52	4
9 25	5
10 05	6
10 20	6
10 38	7
10 55	7

The  
Wo  
Op

GN  
M

The train arrives at the depot on the main (3rd track from the edge), spotting the passenger units at the depot. It uncouples the freight and runs down the main until it can back the freight onto the Team Track (the middle track). It uncouples, backs around the depot and down the main to the Team Track where it couples up to the rear of the freight (where, hopefully, the Elk River Dispatcher has spotted the behind-the-depot cars), uncouples them from the rest of the freight and pushes them down the behind-the-depot track and then spots the cars on the Spur Track. It then backs down to the Freight Track (closest to the edge), pushes the freight awaiting being added to the train down to the Team Track. Then it backs up to the other end of the Team Track, couples to the freight, uncouples from the thru-freight (picked up at other stations along the line or destined for other stations further on) and backs down the line until it can push the cars onto the Freight Track and spots the cars. It then backs down to the main, runs around the depot, couples to the waiting freight on the Team Track, pulls forward and then backs down the main to couple onto the passenger cars, and away we go!

Note that this is a first attempt and that I have NO experience in railroad ops so any advice is most welcome. Who says a one-town layout doesn't have operating potential.

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## club layouts Wed, 2018-01-10

Wed, 2018-01-10 17:20 — Virginian and L...



### club layouts

Wed, 2018-01-10 10:46 — [jamesix](#)

James it sounds like you and I are in violent agreement regarding the club layout. I have the same issues with it and it is suitable for running trains. The guys that designed it blew the design from the word go and I will hit on some of them. No one put it on a map, so now we don't know where it is and we have no clue what it does. Things were built because this is cool. Is there anything I would keep from it for my own layout? Yes, the wide aisle space. After that I would start from a clean slate and eliminate a great many things it has. Trolley lines would be gone. Narrow gauge would be gone. The yard would be longer and the passenger stations gone as well. Those things are used so much the cars could be glued to the track they never move. As someone said it is a dogs breakfast for anyone that tries to see it as a representation of the real thing. Never the less it is what we have and was all planned before I joined.

Now I used that as an example to show what hits many folks when planning their first layout and many that follow. They are focused on putting products from the color pictures in the walthers catalog on their layout regardless of size with out figuring out where it is and what it does. Many times they do not realize why they are unhappy with the layout and then start over.

I think your one town concept is great for all sizes of layouts regardless of size and resources. It can turn a small or medium layout into such a joy to operate and view that the builder is thinking why do more this it is everything I want. If someone has more time and resources and space the large layout built using the same principals of smaller scope can be much more satisfying and would likely not become stale or a maintenance headache.

For many folks the smaller layout will fit their situation better. For some a medium size works best. You have come up with a theme that actually could improve everyone's design regardless of size it is that good.

Rob in Texas

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

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## The Gilbert Model Railroad Club

Wed, 2018-01-10 17:39 — AzBaja

Dave,

The Gilbert Model Railroad Club located under the Gilbert Historical Museum aka the 1913 Gilbert Elementary School.

The GMRC has a rather dedicated layout plan keeping it close to prototype - <http://www.gmrctrains.com/layout.html>

---

I Failed reading comprehension and can not spell, have limited and poorly selective reading skills, maybe I should just Google it?

The Fake Model Railroader - Providing no usable information or value to this or any conversation

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## layout size

Wed, 2018-01-10 17:57 — sailormatlac



"I think your one town concept is great for all sizes of layouts regardless of size and resources. It can turn a small or medium layout into such a joy to operate and view that the builder is thinking why do more this it is everything I want."

Rob, I recall a model railroader - unfortunately I don't remember his name - who when asked what he would do if he had more space replied the exact same thing but with less compression. It's not a matter of adding stuff but better representing them.

Club layouts... some success stories, but too often the same stale tale just as you and Jim described. I recently visited a local large club layout that was hailed as a creative masterpiece designed for "realistic" operation. Trains were in hidden tunnels for half the run, the industrial park was a bloated Switchman's Nightmare and the large industries were indeed large, but you needed a 3 feet long telescopic pole with a magnet to reach the cars on 18" radius curved (all with modern 50ft freight cars). I quickly learned realistic operation meant "very long train" to them. A sad glorified train set. Got boring quickly.

A few years ago, when I started to build a medium sized layout in my friend's basement with his help and another friend, we kind of created a club layout. Soon, people asked to participate in the project... which we accepted. We were naive, thinking the more the merrier and that pooling resources would enable us to make bigger and better thing. In a matter of a few months, the project was a mess, without goal and became a gathering spot for people in need of social life. It was kindergarten. No efforts were spared to straighten things up but it was now a disaster. Before being completely disgusted, we decided to simply go back to our core three founding members and get rid of the others. Not fun to do, but since then, we have found a renewed interest in the project. We share the same goal, layout design preferences and have the same approach to layout building and operation. It helps to greatly minimize compromises (and generally, I'm the one who makes the crucial design decisions). And you can bet my first decision was to remove any kind of continuous run on the layout to deter any visitors to play "my locomotive is catching up the caboosse". Funnily enough, when the returning loop was removed, visitors became less frequent and when official open house happened, they never operated more than a few minutes, getting bored as hell after reaching the terminal in less than 1 minutes full throttle!

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>

Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>

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## Revolutionary - Not Actually

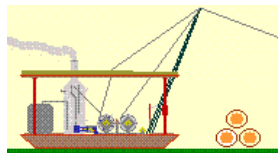
Wed, 2018-01-10 19:14 — Logger01

*as revolutionary as the MRH TOMA concept, and that the one town approach (TOTA) is a natural extension of TOMA.*

I have known many modular model railroaders who have been building and running TOMA sections for many decades, so the concept is not really new. Joe F has just given it a name and a little more structure. In that many of these modules only represented one town (or facility), these modelers have also been doing TOTA for decades.

TOMA - TOTA new designations, and a better descriptions of the the concepts, but not revolutionary.

**Ken K**



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## Rob, I recall a model

Wed, 2018-01-10 22:34 — Virginian and L...



*Rob, I recall a model railroader - unfortunately I don't remember his name - who when asked what he would do if he had more space replied the exact same thing but with less compression. It's not a matter of adding stuff but better representing them.*

Matt, I am not sure but I suspect that quote came from the V&O story which documents the model railroad through many previous articles that were collected by RMC. That is one of the railroads that really influenced me as to what a model railroad should be.

It was placed on the map.

It had a purpose and that was to be a bridge line, haul coal, and serve on line community many of which were barely one horse towns.

Now take that concept and apply the one town concept and everything outside the town is in staging. The town and the short length of on stage mainline that goes with it handles trains but not in the video game mode we see on so many layouts where it looks like a version of frogger but with trains.

That is the great thing about this for me narrower focus and sharper focus.

Rob in Texas

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Focus

Thu, 2018-01-11 06:30 — sailormattlac

"That is the great thing about this for me narrower focus and sharper focus."



You said it Rob. We are into this hobby because we are passionate people. But at some point, to be satisfied and feel a certain sense of achievement, focus is required. When I look at Jim's layout pictures, how mundane yet beautiful it is, I'm reminded once again making brave choices is required to get results.

BTW, such a simple layout with more realistic track length and siding is also a good opportunity to better reproduce locomotive moves. I'm thinking about the Proto Throttle, which would shine on such focussed layout. You may not have dozen of industries, but you have the space required to coast, brake, accelerate, etc. instead of playing the video game you aptly described! ;-)

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

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## Matt — focus

Thu, 2018-01-11 06:53 — James Six

Matt,

you said “mundane”. That was one of my goals. Far too many layouts are the opposite — they are dramatic to me dramatic layouts while often works of art are not realistic because most of railroading is mundane Sa compared to dramatic. I don’t do dramatic.

Jim



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## My One Town Logging Layout

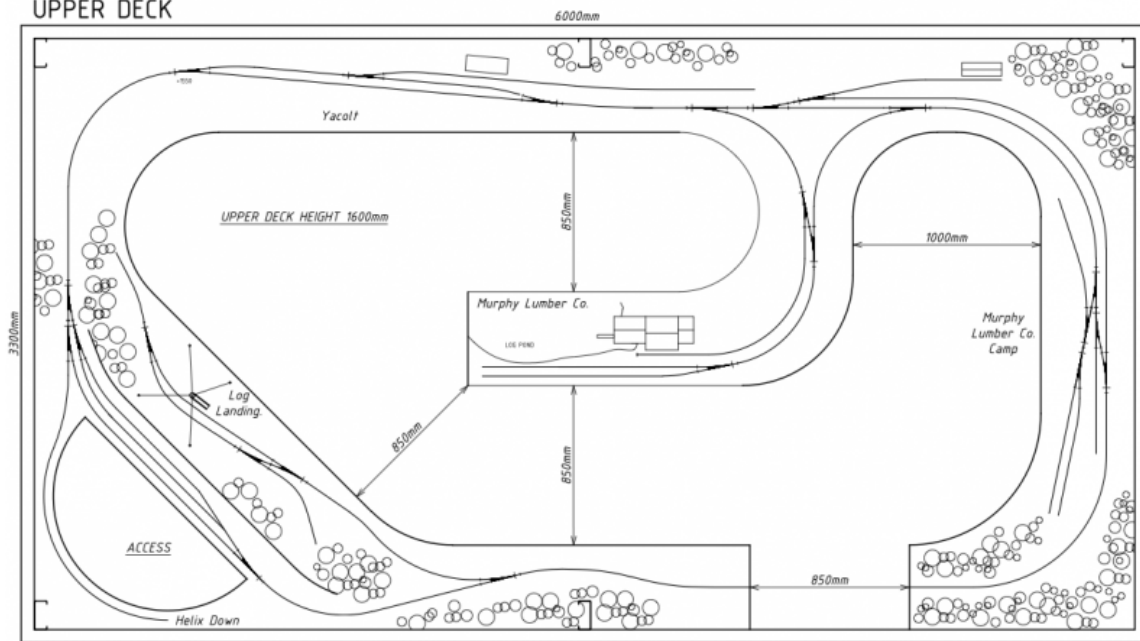
Thu, 2018-01-11 07:13 — batey\_1020

I have shared parts of this before but. It is actually the upper deck of 3 but can serve as a 1 town layout. The concept has developed to be operation with the top deck only and then future lower decks.

Yacolt is based in Washington State and was serviced by the Northern Pacific - I plan to model post 1925 when the line service several logging operations with the main one being Murphy Timber. Prior to 1925 the major logging road was Weyerhaeuser Timber Co under the name of Clarke County Timber Co.

Anyway the plan is for a 20 x 11 ft or 6m x 3.3m room that is one part of my shed and just more than a single car garage.

## UPPER DECK



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## Here is a clip from my track

Thu, 2018-01-11 13:20 — James Six

Here is a clip from my track plan. The phot below is of this same area. With respect to the track plan clip, the phot was taken aimed from the upper right to the lower left. As you can see, the furniture factory in the foreground is a good size, that is, NOT SMALL and the structures along this side of the layout are spread out. This is in keeping with my design goal of spreading things out and not crowding. By doing this with somewhat prototypical spacing the layout can be operated and these industries switched in real time. No fast clock needed or wanted.





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## Here is another angle on the

Thu, 2018-01-11 13:23 — James Six

Here is another angle on the furniture factory. I am working on this factory now. I am installing window glass and details. It will be painted and weathered soon and I should be able to share more photos in the near future.

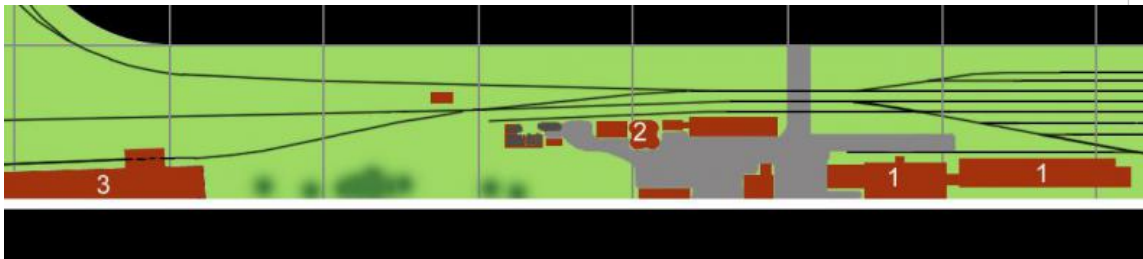


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## The furniture factory is in

Thu, 2018-01-11 13:27 — James Six

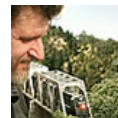
The furniture factory is in the background. The grain elevator with supporting facilities are in the center of this photo. This facility receives and sells lumber, coal, and various rural supplies, . . . and ships grain, and feeds. The coal dealer is part of this same facility -- one big business and all on one long siding. The furniture factory is on its own siding.



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## On TOMA and TOTA

Thu, 2018-01-11 13:30 — joef



*TOMA - TOTA new designations, and a better descriptions of the the concepts, but not revolutionary.*

I agree 100%. These ideas are not new, per se. But to take modular, for instance, it's been mainly seen as how you do show layouts, not home layouts. That needs to change.

What TOMA (and TOTA ... I LIKE it) does is PROMOTE these ideas so they become mainstream for doing HOME layouts. It's about increasing the options for doing home layouts -- it's more about expanding paradigms than it is inventing anything new.

**Joe Fugate**

Publisher, Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine



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## Layout size

Thu, 2018-01-11 13:36 — joef

When it comes to layout size, I maintain it's trackwork complexity that increases layout cost (cost in both money and time), not floor space, per se.

(We're ignoring the cost of the floor space itself here.)

All things being equal, what drives up layout cost in both money and time is the number of turnouts (or other complex track like crossings).

If you double the size of the layout, but still have the same number of turnouts in both, the layout that's 2x will not cost twice as much. It will not cost that much more to double the size. Benchwork and basic scenery are cheap and easy to do. Straight flex track isn't THAT expensive compared to the cost and complexity of turnouts and it's a LOT easier to install and maintain.

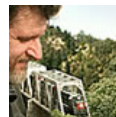
So if you want to ratchet down the costs of a layout project, eliminate turnouts. That's why TOTA (the one town approach) works so well to get a modest layout that is very achievable. It down scopes the thing that makes layout project resource demands skyrocket: turnouts.

### Joe Fugate

Publisher, Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine



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## Joe -- TOMA and TOTA

Thu, 2018-01-11 13:40 — James Six

Hi Joe,

TOMA and TOTA are acronyms. I thing, but am not sure that TOTA is "the one town approach". But what is TOMA?

A dummy wants to know,

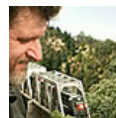
Jim Six 🤔



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## TOMA

Thu, 2018-01-11 13:48 — joef



*TOTA is "the one town approach". But what is TOMA?*

TOMA = The "One Module" Approach.

The idea is to focus on doing your home layout one module section at a time. You build one module section all the way to completion, thereby experiencing the entire hobby. You can do this quickly in weeks or months instead of years.

Then you hang temp staging off each end and start running trains. Ops fun, right from the start!

Want more layout? Great! Build a second module section and add it in. And so on.

The idea is you always have a layout that looks complete in the layout room you don't have to apologize for. You can restrict the mess to another space -- a module work room if you will.

You can enhance the work space with a rotisserie fixture and can rotate the module section to any orientation and work in comfort. Installing tortoises with the module section bottom facing up is a whole lot easier -- and you will do your best work when you are comfortable.

TOMA is very adaptable, too. Upsize, downsize, relocate, change interests, want to rebuild something as your skills grow -- well have at it. TOMA can use a modular standard, or not. Your choice.

#### Joe Fugate

Publisher, Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concept and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Joe, I will also add to your

Thu, 2018-01-11 13:50 — Virginian and L...

Joe, I will also add to your turnouts point (no pun intended). Fewer turnouts reduces maintenance. It also cuts down on wiring, signals, frogs to power. Another excellent point you brought up. You seem to be as knowledgeable as one of those magazine guys. 😊😊

Joe thanks for all you do and producing the best magazine I have ever had the pleasure of subscribing to. Including these forums was a stroke of genius, and moderating them with out choking them to death is a fantastic accomplishment I have not seen elsewhere. Tip of the hat to you and all who help you.

Rob in Texas

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## Track size on my Sturgis layout

Thu, 2018-01-11 13:51 — James Six

A few people have emailed me asking what size track I use on my layout. I use a mix of code-83, code-70, and code-55. I started out tens years ago using only code-70 and code-55. All was Micro Engineering flex track and switches. However, three things happened along the way. I believe that code-55 flex track in HO-scale has been discontinued buy Micro Engineering. The other is that I have found code-55 is cantankerous, that is it breaks easily and does not like weedy scenery covering it.

So, I have shifted form code-70 and code-55 to a more reasonable code-83 and code-70. As a result, the layout is not a mix of codes 55, 70, and 83. All newer and all future installations will be code-70 and code-83. Code-70 iw for sidings and code 83 for the main track. This effectively mimics the prototype and and is also reliable.

In the photo below the track at the left is code-70. The tracks in the center and in the background are code-55.

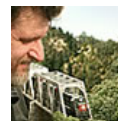
Jim Six



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## That's right -- total cost

Thu, 2018-01-11 13:55 — joef



*Fewer turnouts reduces maintenance. It also cuts down on wiring, signals, frogs to power.*

Yep, when I say cost, I mean total cost: to buy, to install, to wire, and to maintain. Total resource demands.

*Joe thanks for all you do and producing the best magazine I have ever had the pleasure of subscribing to. Including these forums was a stroke of genius, and moderating them with out choking them to death is a fantastic accomplishment I have not seen elsewhere. Tip of the hat to you and all who help you.*

You're welcome. I ultimately do this out of passion for the hobby and to help out my fellow modelers in this hobby I love.

**Joe Fugate**

Publisher, Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine



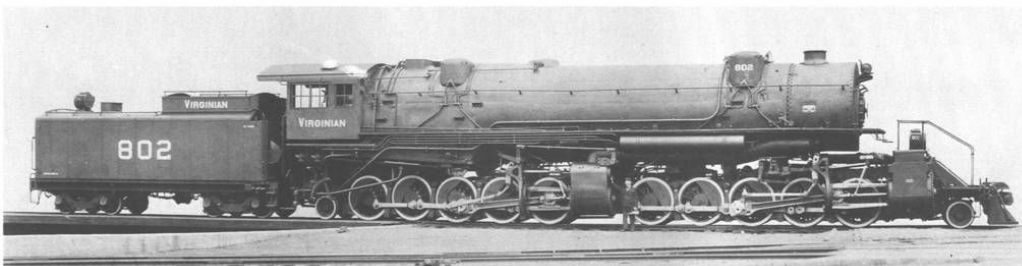
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## Rail sizes are a good way to

Thu, 2018-01-11 14:22 — Virginian and L...



Rail sizes are a good way to model different places. Jim is modeling a branch line in the Midwest that might be built to different standards than other places and eras. Keep in mind that the real railroads used lots of different rail sizes in different places.



Only two railroads fielded 2-10-10-2 articulateds. The Santa Fe's ten engines in the 3000 series were formed in 1911 by marrying existing Decapods to newly-built low-pressure forward units from Baldwin, which also supplied low-height turtleback tenders with backup lights to eliminate turning in helper service. Note the Jacobs-Shupert firebox with U-shaped rolled sections riveted together with slotted diaphragm plates in place of the usual staybolts. Beginning in 1915 each of these elongated Goliaths was remodeled into two single-expansion 2-10-2's by the road's Topeka shops. Generous clearances permitted the design of the Virginian's twenty-driven monsters which stood taller than a latter-day vista-dome car and whose boiler diameter of 118½ inches at largest course and 48-inch forward cylinders were both all-time records. The ten locomotives which Alco delivered to the Virginian in 1918 were sent partially disassembled to permit these hulks to navigate intermediate trackage, even then on a somewhat roundabout route. Their most challenging assignments were taken over by boxcab side-rodder electrics in 1925.

Rails sized to handle locomotives like these would be heavier than rail required on a branch line. Remember to try and pick something representative of what would be in your area instead of an arbitrary standard. Also keep in mind the flange depth of your models so you can be sure they will not be running on the ties or spikes. One other thing to keep in mind the Virginian locomotives were delivered in 1918 and ran well into the 40s so they were definitely suitable for this time period. For perspective notice the man leaning on the second set of cylinders in front of the first set of drivers.

Another nice touch is to model different depths of ballast along the line. I saw this modeled to good effect on a model in the hobby press a while back. This modeler used a combination of HO cork topped by N scale cork to model mainline right of way. He would then use HO cork for sidings and secondary track. Spurs were given N scale cork. He modeled in HO scale and had three heights of track. I am not sure if he used different rail heights as well or different colors of ballast to represent what was on each type of track.

Details like this really make for striking models and once in place really add to the effect. Keep in mind that transitions from one height to another must be gradual to minimize the effect of vertical curves. this is a feature best implemented from the beginning rather than retrofitted but it could be done.

Rob in Texas

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## Rail sizes

Thu, 2018-01-11 14:24 — James Six

A general rule of thumb for HO-scale is that . . .

code-55 = 90-lb rail

code-70 = 112-lb pain

code-83 = 132-lb rail

code-100 = 160-lb rail



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## Rob -- Rail Sizes

Thu, 2018-01-11 16:39 — James Six

Rob, here is an interesting tid-bit:

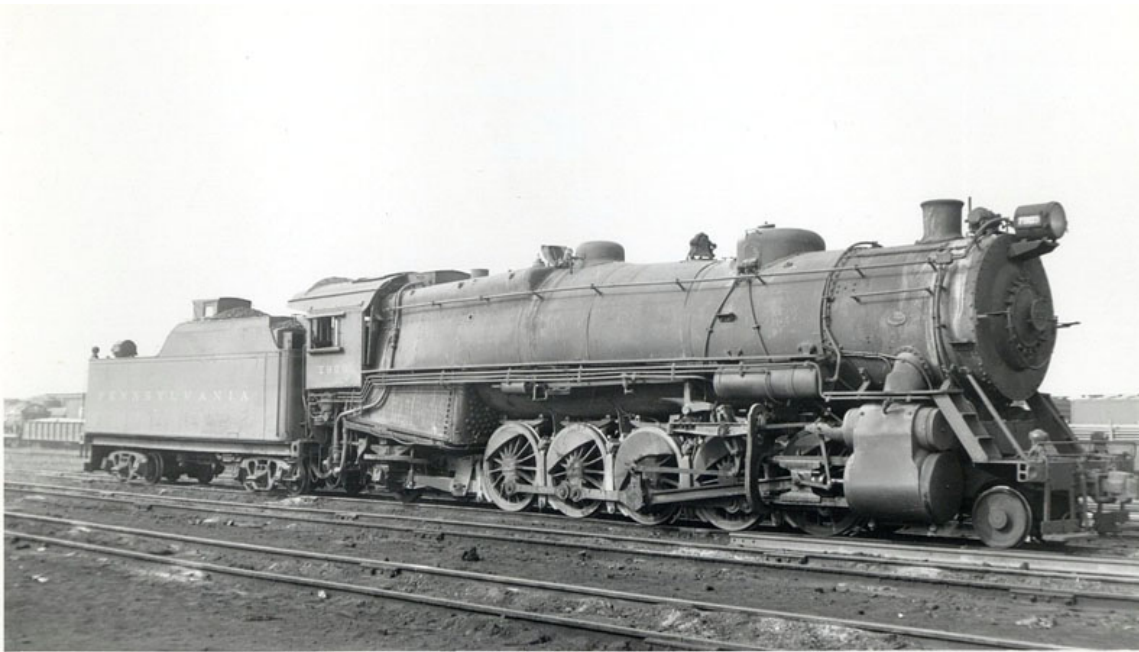
On the old GR&I that I am modeling the line north of Grand Rapids was considered light rail and only certain locomotives were allowed there. These included:

Allowed: 4-6-0, 2-8-0, 2-8-2, and 2-10-2 locomotives

NOT allowed: 4-6-2 K-class (Pacifics such and K3 and K4 classes!!!), 4-8-4 M-class, and 2-10-0 I-class and all other locomotives other than switchers.

My point is that the USRA class N2 2-10-2 locomotives were allowed on light rail!!! (below) These were huge beasts, the the weight was spread across 10 drivers instead of 6 or 8 drivers. I am not sure why the I1sa 2-10-0 locos were not allowed north of Grand Rapids.

At any rate, Sturgis was half-way between Ft. Wayne and Grand Rapids. So, I will have a 2-10-0 dragging coal north to Sturgis -- maybe!



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## Here is a view of the grain

Sun, 2018-01-14 15:20 — James Six

Here is a vies of the grain elevator and supporting facilities. All buildings but one in this view are made from components of Walthers Cornerstone kits. The furniture factory is out of sight to the left. Please forgive me if I have already shown this photo.





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## James, is it possible those



Thu, 2018-01-11 16:08 — Virginian and L...

James, is it possible those N-2s were the light 2-10-2s? I know that sounds funny but the USRA did have many light and heavy classes of locomotives in order to meet different loading capabilities of the various railroads.

I suspect the Pennsy loco 2-10-0 was too heavy even with the 5 pairs of drivers. As I understand it, it was based on their 2-8-2 boiler which was the basis for the heavy USRA 2-8-2 with out the belpare fire box. I bet you already knew this, and the 2-8-2 has the same number of wheels as a 2-10-0 so weight, piston thrusts and reciprocating mass was a big consideration. From what I read the hippos as they were called were very rough riding and were used on areas that had some of the heaviest rail in the United States.

I also remember reading that some terminal trackage in big cities would not allow the Pennsy K4s to pull trains on their bridges but could handle E 8s, F7s etc because the diesels were easier on the track.

Rob in Texas

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## Allowed/Not Allowed

Thu, 2018-01-11 16:32 — Oztrainz

Hi James and all,

The allowed/not allowed is based on the axle-loading of each of the locomotive types. Just because one 4-6-2 is allowed but another is not may be down to how the locomotive is sprung and not just the total weight of the locomotive.

At first glance, ideally the weight of the locomotive should be evenly spread over all axles. This works fine for diesels where all axles are driven. But for steam locomotives the traction equation is different because not all wheels are driven. For steam locomotives the aim of the game is to get as much weight on the coupled drivers. This enables the maximum torque at the rail before slipping occurs for a given wheel diameter (and the bigger the wheel diameter the more prone you are to slipping at starting, so more weight is required to prevent the slipping).

Now how that weight on the drivers is distributed is the important bit. You may find that the bigger 2-10-4 actually has less weight on each driving axle than the 4-6-2 and 4-8-4's. This is the static "point loading" that a locomotive exerts on the rail. Ideally all driving axles should be equally loaded, but the construction of the locomotive may prevent this. So one axle will be loaded lighter than the others. This axle will slip first, and once it lets go, all the others will slip.

However there is another dynamic weight loading that steam locomotives exert on the track every time the wheels go around. The cast-in counterweights on the driving wheels offset this to some degree, but as speeds come up, the combination of static load and dynamic thumping on the track can cause serious damage to the track if the track is not built heavily enough to handle it.

I'll bet that your "allowed" 2-10-4 has smaller drivers and a lower operating speed than the "banned" examples. And I'd guess that on a GA (General Arrangement) drawing that shows that the axle loading, the axle loadings on the "allowed" 2-10-4 are well below those of the "banned" examples.

But there is more to this - the weight of the moving locomotive (and train) has to be transferred to the ground. This is done through the combination of ballast/sleepers(ties)/ and rails. In simple terms, for a given axle load, you can get away with lighter rails and closer-spaced ties or with heavier rail and wider spaced ties. Working backwards if you have a known rail-

weight and known tie-spacing, you can calculate what the "maximum point loading (= axle loading)" before you start damaging rails as the locomotive runs over the track. Once you start stressing rails beyond a certain limit, then eventually you will have broken rails and derailments.

I hope that this helps explain why some locomotives are "allowed" for running on track built to a certain rail-weight/sleeper spacing standard

Regards,

John Garaty

Unanderra in oz

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## Turnout numbers

Thu, 2018-01-11 16:30 — sailormatlac



"So if you want to ratchet down the costs of a layout project, eliminate turnouts. That's why TOTA (the one town approach) works so well to get a modest layout that is very achievable. It down scopes the thing that makes layout project resource demands skyrocket: turnouts."

Joe, you sound just like a real railroad executive... That a good thing and it says a lot about the way we should tackle layout design. With a friend, I once discussed what I called "Fun Per Turnout", meaning the more turnouts you have, the less you use them, thus becoming expensive for seldom used items. I once experimented with a chainsaw one turnout layout module (somewhat as big than a TOMA module) a few years ago. I used the layout for about a 2-3 months and was surprised how much it was a blast to switch that layout for 30 or 45 minutes per day. I can swear that one turnout was one the best track investment in my life!

Also, having few turnouts means longer sidings, more realistic customers and more handling. Looking at these old sidings with 3 to 4 customers we see on old pictures and maps can only tell us how operation-intensive it can becomes. In a 1955 Erie Magazine article, the reporter wrote how switching a few cars at a diminutive limestone plant took more than two hours... The same can happen with a one-town layout because space is barely compressed, thus operation time is not that off from the real thing.

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — jamessix

 jamessix's picture

- [Layout design](#)

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders and I suspect that it will always be so. The best known layouts are almost always large layouts that are operated as a railroad or as a division of a railroad as my friend Tony Koester does with his Nickel Plate Road layout.

This is fine if you have the space, the resources, and the time to build such a model railroad layout. I do NOT and I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not. So then, what do we do other than dream on? Many of my friends go operate on other folk's layouts that have that big dream layout. That is not me. I want my own layout and will never have a big layout. I have worked to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom.

This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a dream layout to discuss the concept and design(s) of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces that many of us have, but do not realize that they can fit a truly fantastic layout into their limited space.

Please join with us.

Jim Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Dramatic

Thu, 2018-01-11 16:38 — sailormattlac

Jim, I look at the recent industry pictures you posted and while extremely mundane, they are dramatic in their own way. The industries are modelled full-size, dwarfing the freight cars. A train switching them will have to travel a lot of real estate. Certainly not overdramatized, but certainly dramatic in its own way. I grew up along a dying CN one-track CN subdivision. The only turnout located in my hometown was lost in the middle of nowhere and serving a small sawmill. Once per day, they picked up and set out 2 cars. The rest was dozens of miles through fields and meadow. Having grown up in

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such a mundane railroad universe have probably biased my choices. But since it was only a single track, minuscule details like the number of isolators on crossarms, depth and width of ditches, vegetation on the roadbed, grade crossings pavement, culverts and relay boxes caught my attention. I'm rarely impressed when such elements are overlooked. I can't believe how many "realistic" layouts completely omit ditches. Water management has always been one of the most important challenge of real railroads.

Matt

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## Jim

Thu, 2018-01-11 19:37 — Don Hanley

I have a quick question regarding the grain elevator. Modeling the depression era means that the poured in place grain elevator seems to modern for the time period. I know reinforced concrete became an accepted practice shortly before 1910 or so. Prior to that it was considered somewhat experimental. I am not saying its wrong, just curious on how you came up with the choice.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## TOMA

Thu, 2018-01-11 19:43 — Don Hanley

Joe

While TOMA is an adaption of previous modular construction, I will contend that it is revolutionary, at least in its application. Prior to your adaption modules were used for temporary layouts, taken to train shows and similar events, and then packed away till the next event.

Your adaption is to use it for the construction of a home layout in a permanent or semipermanent state, having an operational layout rather quickly.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## Concrete Elevator

Thu, 2018-01-11 20:42 — sailormattlac

Don, as surprising as it may sounds, concrete silos were quite "common" by the 1910s. But I'll give it to you at that time, it was mainly huge grain terminals that used that new technology. However, by the 20s and 30s concrete was becoming quickly main stream as a building material. A new competitor in town, or a elevator that burned down, or simply modernizing a plant could explain the presence of a modern concrete elevator. While doing a quick Google search, I found out about an Australian Grain Board that was created in 1934 and used two type of concrete elevators back then similar to Jim's own elevator. But to be honest, rural concrete elevators seems to have been a post WWII fad, mainly in the 50s and 60s. I'm curious to hear about Jim's own elevator. Maybe it's a remnant from before he backdated to Depression Era.



Matt

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## I have a quick question

Thu, 2018-01-11 21:58 — Virginian and L...



*I have a quick question regarding the grain elevator. Modeling the depression era means that the poured in place grain elevator seems to modern for the time period. I know reinforced concrete became an accepted practice shortly before 1910 or so. Prior to that it was considered somewhat experimental. I am not saying its wrong, just curious on how you came up with the choice.*



Don here is one from the 1950s in Roanoke VA. It figures prominently in many photos in the back ground of the Virginian Railway engine terminal.



I have looked but have been unable to find the exact year it was built, but I believe it was in the early part of the 1900s before 1930.

#### Virginian Railroad Old Locomotive film, "Virginian Vignettes"



In the film above at the 953 mark there is a view from mill mountain overlooking the grain elevator behind the yard. It is large and made of concrete. In one of the books I have (not sure which one right now) there was mention of this and when it was built and torn down. I am thinking of the 1920s but I am old enough for memory to have been the third thing that goes and I forgot what the other two are.

I am thinking they might not be wide spread but I would think large concrete structures would be fairly common around railroads as the raw materials could be delivered to the construction site fairly reasonably.

Rob in Texas

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## "When it comes to layout

Thu, 2018-01-11 23:30 — ctxmf74

*"When it comes to layout size, I maintain it's trackwork complexity that increases layout cost (cost in both money and time), not floor space, per se."*

It depends on the benchwork area, a long narrow layout is cheaper than a long wide layout even if the both have the same number of turnouts and track. Scenery is often the most expensive part of a layout. Unless one is modeling a desert structures and details can cost more than the track and trains. ....DaveB



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## Concrete Elevators

Fri, 2018-01-12 07:52 — Don Hanley

Matt, Rob



I know that reinforced concrete construction became common prior to WWI. Having grown up in rural northeast Indiana, the reinforced concrete elevators were from the 40's and 50's. In the 70's I would estimate that it was a 50/50 mix between wood and concrete for the main house. The grain silos were a mix of steel or concrete, no wood.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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 jamessix's picture

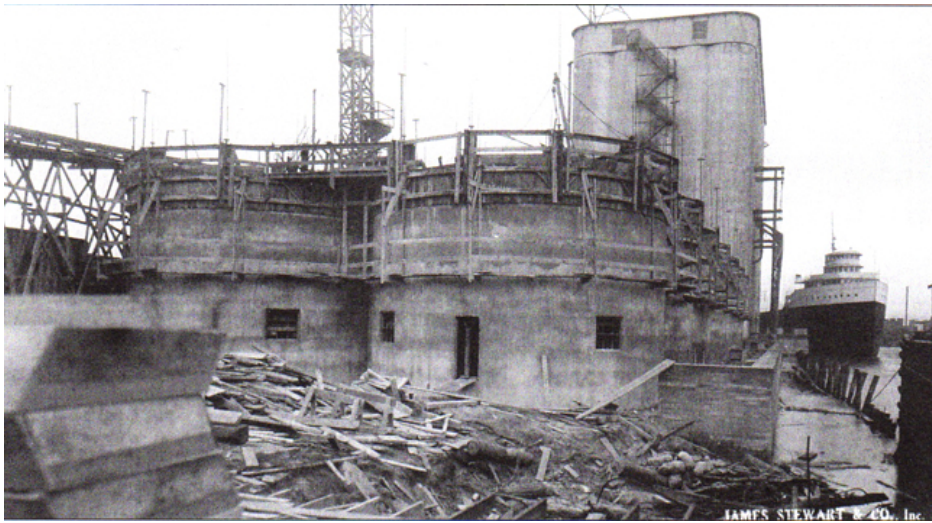
## Don and all --

Fri, 2018-01-12 08:02 — jamessix

The search for a durable and economical method of construction of grain elevators culminated in the early twentieth century when slip-form reinforced concrete became the standard material for grain elevators. In the middle of the 1890s, Minneapolis grain dealer F. H. Peavey sent his engineer, C. F. Haglin to Europe to study Belgian, Welch, and other developments there in concrete grain elevator construction. Haglin learned a lot about reinforced concrete from his trip and in 1899 erected at Minneapolis the first reinforced concrete bin elevator in the United States. Known as "Peavey's Folly," it consisted of a single cylindrical concrete bin.

By 1905 the construction method proved successful and the construction of slip-form reinforced concrete elevators had begun to take hold in the United States. By 1915 this method of elevator construction had all but replaced wood and steel construction of elevators. During the years between WWI and WWII the slip-form reinforced concrete grain elevator had become the standard in North America.

In 1928 both Butler and Brock began producing and selling corrugated steel grain bins. This new method of construction slowly became accepted, particularly for small bins. After 1950 this newest construction method began to displace concrete elevator construction and the era of slip-form concrete elevators was over for all but very large construction which is still used today.



So in conclusion, we model railroaders can use the Walther's concrete elevator for any setting after about 1910, but if we are to have multiple elevators I would not recommend using more than one unless you are modeling post 1920.

Below is a slip-form concrete elevator in northwest Indiana that is out of service when I photographed it on June 24, 2006. According to a couple of old timers that I talked to who lived there all of their lives the older part of this elevator was built during the roaring 20s. I have hundreds of photos of concrete elevators that I photographed during the ten years that Tom Johnson and I were doing "photo safaris" throughout Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio to locate and take pictures of elevators.



James Six, modeling 1925-1935



## Concrete Elevators

Fri, 2018-01-12 08:31 — jamessix

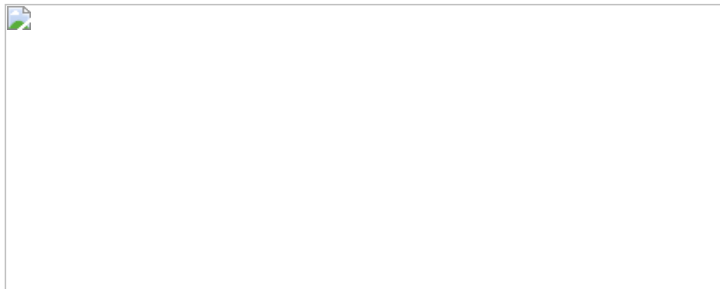
Here is a concrete elevator that the two main (early) buildings are slip-form reinforced concrete, but they have rectangular footprints, not circular. Guess what, this elevator was located in Sturgis MI and was sandwiched between the PRR/GR&I and the NYC/Pumpkinvine. The structure was torn down a few years after I took these photos on 10/22/2006. The NYC was to the left and the PRR to the right in the photos. The PRR track remains in place. The NYC is long gone. I have lots of photos of this elevator, plenty enough to build a good model of it

The challenge for me is .to find out when this structure was built. I model 1925 to 1935. I know that there was a wood elevator at this location in a photo taken in 1905. If this concrete structure was built post my modeling era, then I won't bother modeling it. On the other hand . . .





James Six, modeling 1925-1935



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## Local newspaper archives

Fri, 2018-01-12 08:43 — Virginian and L...

Local newspaper archives might have a record of a fire at the elevator that destroyed the wooden structure, or its demolition. Articles about businesses in the local community seemed to be more prevalent in the early part of the 20th century than today.

Rob in Texas

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — jamessix

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders and I suspect that it will always be so. The best known layouts are almost always large layouts that are operated as a railroad or as a division of a railroad as my friend Tony Koester does with his Nickel Plate Road layout.

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This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a dream layout to discuss the concept and design(s) of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces that many of us have, but do not realize that they can fit a truly fantastic layout into their limited space.

Please join with us.

Jim Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

 jamessix's picture

### Another type of elevator construction

Fri, 2018-01-12 10:45 — jamessix

This abandoned elevator in Speicherville Indiana (a few miles north of Wabash) shows tile construction Part of the building facing us has been removed exposing the original brown tiles. The structure had been painted white at one time. I have found and photographed many elevators with tile construction like this.

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Below is the track-side of the same elevator. I suspect this elevator existed in the 1920s but am not sure. To model back in the 1920s you have to wonder how much of this existed. I suspect only the tile silos and head house atop them. The structure attached to the silos at the right was wooden but was later covered with steel siding. I would model it without the steel siding for the earlier years that I model.



Tom Johnson weathered this SOUTHERN covered hopper! 😊

James Six

**Modeling 1925 to 1935**



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## Kalamazoo Tank & Silo

Fri, 2018-01-12 09:50 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

Kalamazoo Tank & Silo built silos using those tiles. The tiles were actually made in Carbon, IN and then shipped to Kalamazoo. This could very well be one of their installations. The plant is gone today and one short silo survives at the plant's location which was served by the MC mainline.

Robert

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## James, I lived in several



Fri, 2018-01-12 10:36 — Virginian and L...

James, I lived in several different houses built in the 20s and 30s and looked at many more from that time period and all of them had tile basements. The tiles were different sizes than the ones in your photos but were tiles. From what I saw they were very predominate in your time period and you would likely be very accurate in using it. Oddly when I zoomed in on the structure that looked to be concrete block construction I was trying to see if it had tile for the capstones on the cornice but they all appeared to be concrete. so my thoughts on tossing out anything for a date were not relevant.

Rob in Texas

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## Rob -- James, I lived in several

 jamesix's picture

Fri, 2018-01-12 10:40 — jamesix

The two tall sections of that Sturgis elevator were slip-form concrete. All of the auxiliary add-ons were concrete block or cinder block.

James Six

### ***Modeling 1925 to 1935***



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## Concrete elevators



Fri, 2018-01-12 11:52 — Don Hanley

Jim

Thanks for the info on concrete elevators, they actually became common much earlier than I understood them to be. I remember when I lived in Monroeville, IN the grain company added 4 new silos. It was an education to watch them jump the forms from the bottom row, and set them for the next pour. The only thing holding the entire set of forms up on the silo is friction. I wish I had taken some pictures of it.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## My One Town Layout in HO



Fri, 2018-01-12 13:48 — fritzg

When I saw this posting in my email this morning, I knew I had to post my layout. Several years ago I built an N-scale layout using modules around the room before the TOMA concept became a reality. I did this with the idea of being able to move the layout if I was going to move to a different house. Well that happened. But in the new house there was not room enough to replant the layout in its entirety due to its size. The previous room was much larger. But I adapted it and was successful in running it for a while using just a couple of modules.

After years of full room HO, and N-scale layouts, I decided to return to HO on a smaller switching style layout. Continuous run layouts, although seeing trains run was nice, resulted in my boredom to an extent. Having an opportunity a few years ago, to operate on a large N-scale layout, I found out that as my job switching at end point yards was very fulfilling. Although this design start point does not offer continuous run from the beginning it does offer hours of switching operations. The design if built out with the future prospect does offer continuous run opportunity within the concept. My original design intents are always for a larger layout, but space is a restriction that many of us cannot escape.

That is why I decided to build an HO switching layout. I chose Western Pacific in the 1950's with which I am relatively familiar. My single town is northern San Francisco. The San Francisco car float operation appeared to be one that was small enough, yet busy enough to model. Western Pacific used a car float to deliver LCL and full load customer shipping from the Oakland side of operations to the San Francisco bay car float dock. There were originally two switch engines busy unloading and loading the car floats as they were delivered by tug boat up to 1957. In 1957 the diesel powered, Las Plumas railroad car ferry was introduced. I am modeling up to 1957. But this design can but adapted for later years of this exact float dock, or any other float dock scenario on a bay or river. Exercising a little modeler's license, I decided to incorporate enough industry to switch loads and empties in the city, to keep at least two to three people busy.



Because of the limitations of the 11 x 12 room, staging was not an option in my design unless I incorporated it into my layout. So as you can see in the picture, I have four track yard to the right of the dock that can be used as "staging". I even thought about entering the TOMA contest until I realized I cannot offer "need to have some form of temporary staging". But with a switching layout, I don't really need staging in the traditional sense.

It has been difficult to find exacting information about this end of Western Pacific operations. So in exercising modeler's license I laid out a float dock, adjoining yard, small diesel facility, and industry to run operations. Both modules have at each end, a track that can be used to continue expansion around the room for continuous run operations if desired. So I decided to start with two modules to get operations running. Module one is the city module which enough industry to service and module two is the float module supplying the cars to move from float to yard tracks, to categorizing cars and then to deliveries and pickup of empties.



Operations could use up to three switch engines primarily. One to unload and load cars from the float and spot on one of the three yard tracks. A second switcher is used for pulling from float yard tracks to build local industry drops on the two out-going/in-coming tracks at the middle of float module. Then a third switcher could be the local town industry switcher performing drops and returning empties to the middle tracks waiting to be loaded back on the float to return to Oakland side of operations.

Both modules are 8 feet long. The float module butts up to the city module which is planted in the corner of the room. So over all dimensions are 8 x 10 feet and it stands 57 inches at the top of the rail. I like watching the trains at that level; a slightly elevated view. The city module is 30 inches in depth, but the deepest turnout throw is only 24 inches. My building "flats" are not flat, they have depth with actual flats behind them to fill the skyline. The float module is 19 inches in depth because I wanted the ability to easily pick at couplers and turnout throws without too much reach involved.



This is a picture showing a few of the "flats" at the wall. Just on the far side of the FeatherRiver box car is the deepest turnout throw. I use all manual throws to cut the cost (and hassle) of electric actuated and/or remote mechanics...I have used both on previous layouts.



This is a picture showing the float/barge and the yard loaded with cars. If think it offers plenty of cars to move around the layout. As you can see the depth of this module offers the ability to access the cars easily.

I am in the process of detailing the buildings and am getting ready to weather all the cars with light weathering.

For myself, having the smaller layout that I could bring to a "finished" level, (layouts are never finished), and be able to operate in a relatively short time is really the advantage. I am really glad, Jim, that you started this post. Time does not allow me to be able to post and interact as much as I would like to, but I have a day off today, HA!

fritzg

grass valley, ca

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## FritzG -- your one-town layout

Fri, 2018-01-12 13:12 — jamessix

Wow Fritz! Looks like you have put a lot of great work into your layout. Thanks for sharing your photos. Feel free to share more. I always enjoying seeing a really good layout.

James Six

### **Modeling 1925 to 1935**



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## @fritzg

Fri, 2018-01-12 14:05 — joef

Wow, Fritz, that's a superb looking layout.

Glad to hear you "get it" as to how much fun small but finished and operational can be.

I've come to realize that for me, smaller and done well beats a large Plywood Pacific any day. That's why Siskiyou Line 2 will be a TOMA that gets done as it goes along. If I never fill the room with layout taking that approach, then I'm not worried.

Quality of run beats quantity of run hands down.

## Joe Fugate

Publisher, Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine



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## Concrete elevators

Fri, 2018-01-12 14:10 — sailormatlac

Thanks for the excellent informations Jim. I didn't know the rural concrete elevators were so "old". I've often seen farm silos built with concrete tiles, but that elevator with clay is a new thing to me.



Hard to tell the built date of Sturgis elevator just from pictures. You can hardly use the architectural details to guess the built date. I can only say that early concrete structures were often embellished with some concrete trims and details borrowed from traditional constructions. It was particularly popular in the 1910s. By the 20s, modernism was starting to take root and they were gradually eliminated. By the 30s, they were generally considered superfluous and altogether omitted. The Sturgis elevator had a late 20s, early 30s vibe. In all honesty, I wish it fits your time frame because it is a detail too often overlooked by old time modelers.

You can look for Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps to find out when the elevator was built. I found a few ones online on Library of Congress website. I have problem navigating the website viewer, but judging from the thumbnails, I saw a structure that looks like a set of concrete bins. The maps are from 1923. If more modern version could be found, it would be perfect.

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g4114sm.g042081923/?st=gallery>

EDIT: no concrete elevator in 1923.

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.


Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>

Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>

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## Matt -- Sanborn Maps

 jamessix's picture

Fri, 2018-01-12 15:39 — jamessix

OMG Matt!!!!!!!!!!!!!! 🤔

I have been looking for those Sanborn maps for more than six years now! Man, there was a lot more there than I realized. Looks like there was more industry on the NYC Pumpkin Vine branch that paralleled the PRR and the NYC Old Road east-west mainline that there was on the PRR. LOL

Thanks you from the center of my heart my friend!!! 😊

James Six

**Modeling 1925 to 1935**



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — jamessix

 jamessix's picture

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Please join with us.

Jim Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### HABS/HAER Search facility

Fri, 2018-01-12 15:56 — Oztrainz

Hi Matt/James,

try the search facility on the HABS-HAER (Historic American Building Survey - Historic American Engineering Record) website at the Library of Congress at <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/>

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Put "concrete elevator" in the Search field and it returns 95 entries for concrete elevators - click on that and there are a series of plans that should give you some idea of how these things hung together. the other entries returned are photos that may be useful as well.

If you are "inventive" with the Search field and try things like the name of your town, you might turn up more photos and plans (including any digitized Sanborn Maps. Not all of the Sanborn maps have been digitized yet. There is an "Advanced Search" capability as well that will allow multiple words or phrases (enclosed in " " marks) to be used. Hint - in the Advanced search try name of town and Sanborn as the search criteria.

Good Luck and Happy Hunting,

Regards,

John Garaty


Unanderra in oz

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## Thanks John

 jamessix's picture

Fri, 2018-01-12 17:55 — jamessix

Thanks John. I will do so.


James Six

### ***Modeling 1925 to 1935***



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## Spread out and not crowded

 jamessix's picture

Fri, 2018-01-12 19:09 — jamessix

One thing I believe is crucial to a successful layout is to spread things out and not over crowd ore over detail. This is particularly important for small layouts. Trouble is, the smaller the layout the tougher it is to spread things out. In order to do so you may have to include fewer things on the layout. This photo taken this evening on my layout is supposed to demonstrated this.



James Six

### ***Modeling 1925 to 1935***



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## Thanks John

Sat, 2018-01-13 09:05 — sailormatlac

I always forget how LoC is a great place to look for information. By the way, looking at Walthers Prairie Coop Concrete Elevator, they list it as suitable from 1915. Which fits what we discussed here.

@Jim: I totally agree, when space isn't available, better start to remove stuff than crowd the place. At some point, it is more important to keep the density level of the prototype than the number of individual items.

Here's a shot from our club layout... There's is nothing of interest for more than 18 feet, except a grade crossing and a culvert. Track, grass, ditches, electric and telegraph poles are all that is required. And no, I have no shame to have "wasted" so much space when I could complain I lack space. This basically works as a one-location layout, with a large cement plants and vacant lots all around, just like the real prototype.





Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

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## Modular One Town layout

Sat, 2018-01-13 17:25 — Moe line



I like this one town concept, and could see it working as a temporary layout for me, my Hometown which I have started to construct on a few portable modules, has many good points for the one town. It is a division point where the Soo Line main track runs through the town and rail yard in a North and South direction, and just outside of town the main crosses what was at the Era I model (1954) a Great Northern branch line.


Once the crossing and interchange tracks are past, there is Dakota Junction where the branch line splits off to run West out into North Dakota, better known as the Wheat Line. My town has a small nine track yard, 14 stall Roundhouse and servicing area, many grain elevators, a potato warehouse, freight house, Gambles warehouse, team track, scrap yards, feed and farm supply stores and passenger depot.

It also had an ice house, fuel and oil dealer, and a turkey processing plant, that I would imagine at one time used the iced down reefer cars to haul out the frozen turkeys. I think it has enough elements that it would be a great one town layout.

I would have to bend the yard around a corner to fit it into the 18 foot by 22 foot temporary space I currently have available for modules, and turn the main back on itself, like Jim Six has done, and connect the branch back into the main through staging. Anyway, if anyone wants to check it out on Google Earth, look up Thief River Falls, MN and see what I mean about it being a good town for this concept. Jim

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Moe-Line

 jamessix's picture

Sat, 2018-01-13 17:00 — jamessix

I agree. Let us know if you actually build this modular layout. Should prove interesting! 👍

James Six

### **Modeling 1925 to 1935**



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## Building

Sat, 2018-01-13 17:30 — Moe line



Jim, I have all the modular tables built for the yard, corner module for the Roundhouse and turntable, and the locomotive service area and rip tracks, I haven't been able to do the track laying yet, because of Hurricane Harvey damage I have to repair, and working 12 plus hour days on the full size Union Pacific Railroad, but I intend to build what I described as part of a future larger layout once I have the outbuilding built to house the entire future layout, I will definitely keep everyone posted once I get some real progress made. Jim

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## Hi Jim: Thief River Falls in

Sat, 2018-01-13 19:10 — BOK

Hi Jim:

Thief River Falls in the 70s with the jct, to the Fordville Sub. was an interesting place.

When I worked for the Soo back then there was a fair amount of potatoes (not french fries) which rode in both mechanical,reefer cars and trailers plus seasonal,frozen turkeys. To service, the TOFC business there was a circus style ramp out by the yard office or maybe it was downtown close to the old freight house? I believe the Gambles facility you referred to was the Gamble Robinson grocery wholesaler out of Minneapolis which had a brick building across from the passenger depot.In addition to the industries you listed I think there was at one time an LPG distributor or possibly fertz. tanks around the elevator.

Thief River was a main terminal for the Soo with the roundhouse performing inspections and lite repairs particularly, for power working west to Fordville and the way freight south to Glenwood. i know a snow plow was stationed there, like at Glenwood and I believe ther was also a wreck train located there along with the RIP track folks. At one time we kept a pair of old "covered wagons" up there for snow plow service since the cabs provided good visibility for engineers and were made as "tight" as possible to keep out the snow. Before GPs and SDs, the Fordville line used either Baldwin or Alco road switchers?

As I recall TRF was the home terminal for crews working south to Glenwood and in turn around service to Noyes and return. I think it might also have been the home terminal for Fordville line crews before it was sold off to the short line.

Barry

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## That sounds like an



Sat, 2018-01-13 21:22 — Virginian and L...

That sounds like an interesting concept for a railroad. I will be following your updates with interest. Thief River Falls is a rather interesting name.

Rob in Texas

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Jim, one way to disguise the

Sun, 2018-01-14 09:26 — Virginian and L...

Jim, one way to disguise the curve would be to use a broad radius like a 60 inch curve in HO. Curve the backdrop a larger radius ( if bench work is 2 feet deep backdrop and rear edge would be 84 inches). It is still a curve but not as noticeable and all your equipment will uncouple and couple through the curve normally. I really think your idea for a model railroad sounds very interesting and it sounds like it would be a joy to operate.

Rob in Texas

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@Rob

Sun, 2018-01-14 09:38 — Moe line



Rob, I like that idea, the curved area could also be where one of the bridges crossed the river, between the north and south sides of the town, and separated the creameries from the turkey plant, since a river scene would help ease the look of the curve, and is needed because of the scenic element of the river and its banks. The rest of the town is completely flat with no hills or valleys other than the river banks. Thanks for the input, Jim

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## Hi Jim: I worked with Stu

Sun, 2018-01-14 10:16 — BOK

Hi Jim:

I worked with Stu Nelson back when i was on the Soo's power Board in Minneapolis years ago. He is a good guy and a wealth of information.

Somewhere I have all the track charts for the old, Soo (pre-Milwaukee Road) and I'll have to see if I can copy and post Thief River for you if interested? It's not a station map with lots of industry details but it does show the tracks in service in the 70/80s.

Thanks, for sharing your layout and history. I remember working in the field (engineer/conductor) and those 16/14 and finally, 12 hour days... constantly with only a day off in about 30. In those times I didn't think too much about model railroading ...just surviving. But look at the bright side: all that overtime pay!

Barry

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## Needing Some Suggestions

Sun, 2018-01-14 10:59 — JackM

This is a shot in the dark, but thought I would give this a chance. It has been a couple of frustrating weeks trying to come up with a manageable track plan. Let's first start with my goal. Like Jim, I don't want an army to run my layout, mostly myself and maybe one other. Short operating sessions, about thirty minutes I'm ready to move on. I also give myself five years to get this to a decent level of completion working on weekends only.

What I like to do: 1) Build freight cars. Have an Accurail, Tichy and Red Caboose going currently.

2) Build buildings. Mild kitbash or out of box with realistic paint and weathering.

3) Scenery, granger territory. Concentrate on spacing and no switching puzzles.

4) Favorite railroad, Pennsy

What I hate: Electronics, benchwork. Have benchwork up, brackets and door panels.

I settled on a Pennsy branchline that ran from Indianapolis to Vincennes, granger with coal trains coming out of southern Indiana. I have about 18 feet of useable space along a wall not counting allotted space for fiddle yards on either end. I tried to use the town of Worthington, IN as my model, two elevators, two oil distributors, a lumber yard, a feed dealer and a non-prototype furniture manufacturer with multiple spots. I just can't get this to work in 18 feet, too compressed. I also want, to avoid industries along the front of the layout, had some bad experience in the past knocking off buildings.

So, I went back to Tony Koester's article on Wingate, IN way back in 1995 Model Railroad Planning for something simpler. There is just not enough meat on the bone for my one town. What I am asking does anyone have a good example of a track plan that would fit. It does not have to be Pennsy or the industries listed for Worthington. I am OK to proto-lance and not match some town track for track.

Thanks for any ideas or thoughts.

Jack

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## You might look back to some



Sun, 2018-01-14 11:24 — Virginian and L...

You might look back to some of the published track plans regarding 2x10 and 2x12 layouts. As I recall they are mostly switching layouts that represent some urban scenery and by expanding them to fit your space you would uncrowd them. I suspect different industries could be modeled such as a freight house. If you build it fairly large you would have reason for lots of traffic to it, lots of cars for the same industry, and it could be served twice daily. The other advantage nothing needs to happen there besides loading and unloading of cars. Also in the area there were often multi story warehouses in the decades in the early to middle part of the twentieth century that would also need frequent service. You would not need to model the reason for such a concentration of businesses other than by having it on the back drop.

Your line could then be a switching area off the main line of a major town in the Midwest like Kansas City, Indianapolis, Columbus, etc you get the idea. If you choose you can avoid the main line and just model the switching district and the connection to the fiddle yards could represent interchange location and the connection to the main yard that has the main running through it.

Rob in Texas

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## @Barry



Sun, 2018-01-14 16:35 — Moe line

Hi, Barry, I would definitely be interested in your track charts, they would be a great help with my design, you may also send them to my email address if that would be better. [jamesmoe63@gmail.com](mailto:jamesmoe63@gmail.com) is my direct email. Thanks, Jim

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## My one town -- Sturgis MI

Sun, 2018-01-14 16:40 — James Six

I have been studying the Sanborn maps of Sturgis MI and have a very relevant (for me) conclusion. That is, about 80% of the industries that were railroad served were on the NYC and not on the PRR. Hmmmm . . . The maps are dated February 1923 so they are very relevant for my 1925-1935 setting.

The question now becomes what do I do? Are there enough industries on the PRR in Sturgis for my layout? Maybe yes. Maybe not. If there are it is barely. On the other hand, there are way more than enough on the NYC side of things.

This is all the more reason to only loosely follow the prototype. If I try to adhere too closely, then I am already off base so to speak. I can name my factories and business from what is on the Sanborn maps. This will happen. But I cannot arrange the sidings as they were on the maps. For that matter, I cannot arrange the track to match the Sanborn maps. The track arrangement in Sturgis was essentially a large "+" shape. Frankly, a "+" shape does not lend itself well to model railroad layout design! LOL

So, my track plan is what it is. I like it a lot and it is and will be satisfying to operate and complete the modeling. Did someone once say that we all have to make compromises?! So much for prototype modeling. I am merely a "prototype based" modeler (and proud of it).



## Sanborn Maps



Sun, 2018-01-14 17:05 — sailormatrac

Jim, I'm glad the maps have been useful to further your thoughts about Sturgis. Reconciling reality with a layout is made of compromise. The only thing you can work on is grasping the sense of the place and era. That is the biggest challenge a modeler can face since it implies artistry and sensibility coupled with a good sense of observation. I have no doubt you have what's required to do this.

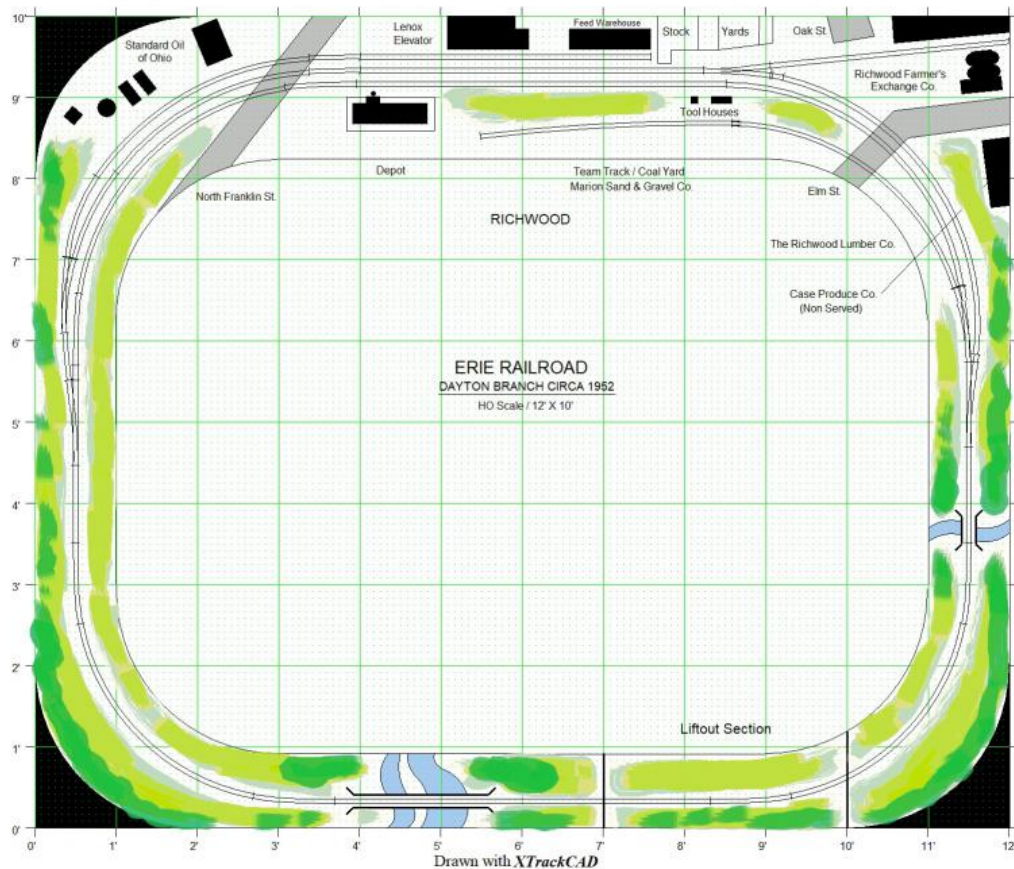
As for the PRR side of the layout, one has to ask himself if it is required to fill it with customers. Maybe keeping things more simple on that side could bring a nice contrast. I hardly visualize how the PRR side would look like, but it cost nothing to try to imagine it. I've been asking myself the same questions since I started to investigate the Dayton Branch. I finally settled on Richwood, OH... just like Sturgis, I found out the town had at least twice more customers than anticipated and quite a lot of sidings. Compressing it in a few feet did require to exert a lot of restraint and to not fall in the obvious trap of cherry picking cute items. Interestingly, I discovered that many customers were not directly served by rail. It helps a lot since these industries are not physically modeled but rather staged by the team track. I believe this is another way to help keep the layout simple yet interesting without being a caricature of the place.

Here is a worked out example based on Richwood Sanborn maps. In yellow are the railroad's customers. A few of them are offline (the lumber yard, the produce company and a mill). The town had 3 feed mills and three elevators in the mid-fifties, including two concrete ones. Add to that an extensive coal yard on the team track also used to load sand in hoppers, a cattle pen and an oil dealer. Not that bad for a small town.



Here's how I translated that in HO scale. While some compromises are evident, particularly the reduce number of sidings to keep a realistic density, I'd like to point out all the structure from the depot to Oak Street are not compressed. They are full scale to better reproduce how the real thing looked. The goal is that the layout focus is the team track framed by the depot, with the feedmill as a backdrop. You can also notice a few industries are not even modeled put rather implied. Thus, the

operation potential don't drop too much while keeping the layout visual balance realistic.



Matt

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## I should really stop reading,

Sun, 2018-01-14 17:30 — hobbes1310

I should really stop reading, keeping updated on this thread.

Makes me think, of using less track on my port scenes

Phil



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Phil -- I should really stop reading,

Sun, 2018-01-14 17:50 — James Six

LOL 😄

Sometimes less is better.



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Matt -- Sanborn maps

Sun, 2018-01-14 17:52 — James Six

Matt,

Obviously you and I have been going through some of the same struggles. 😊 I really like your track plan. You have captured key ingredients and have a plan that should yield plenty of fun and satisfaction.



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## Less is more

Sun, 2018-01-14 17:58 — umauma railway

Really?

You guys are killing me here. I was perfectly content in my little world until Jim started this followed by Mayt and others. I'm with Phil - I'm was going to quit reading this stuff but its ubiquitous!

@Phil. Do it. You can always add more. I'm stuck. If I was able, the layout would be coming down. (Small blessings?)

Neil Erickson, Umauma, HI

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## James and others with a

Sun, 2018-01-14 18:06 — Virginian and L...



James and others with a competing line owning the sidings, There is always trackage rights to put into effect. This might be a reciprocal agreement along the line which benefits both railroads in different towns. Sometimes the track would be pooled and a (only on paper) company formed that was in fact a terminal railway but jointly owned with profits and expenses split according to car loading.

Or throw those maps away and go back to being happy! 😈

Rob in Texas

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## Sanborn maps and the BIG COMPROMISE

Sun, 2018-01-14 18:11 — James Six

A survey of the Sanborn maps of Sturgis MI will not find a coal fired power plant. There has never been such a plant in Sturgis. However, Sturgis built a hydro-electric power plant 17 miles our of town on the St. Joseph River. This does me no good at all.

So then, why od you have a coal-fired power plant? Answer: Because I want one. I worked in the power industry for more than two decades and I simply want a coal-fired power plant. Talk about compromise.



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## Those Pesky Sanborn Maps



Sun, 2018-01-14 18:18 — JC Shall

*A survey of the Sanborn maps of Sturgis MI will not find a coal fired power plant.*

Now Jim, if you *knew* there was no coal fired power plant in Sturgis, why'd you have to go looking at those pesky Sanborn maps? 😏

-Jack

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## Power Plant



Sun, 2018-01-14 18:23 — sailormatlac

Jim, at this point, since you exclude a lot of stuff from the town anyway, I don't see why the power plant wouldn't work as long as:

-It's size fits the needs of a town such as Sturgis;

-Its interactions with the rail side of the town is relevant with what was commonly found in your area.

The Sanborn maps should be used to give you an idea of Sturgis, now tie you down unless you were recreating a perfectly historical diorama, which isn't what you are doing.

Matt

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## Neil & Jim



Sun, 2018-01-14 18:32 — sailormatlac

I can clearly remember the first large layout I built with friends. I had dreamed of it for decades and it quickly became an uncontrollable monster with an appetite for track and turnout. When we torn it down and built the next one, it was more coherent yet filled with a lot of track and locations spaced too closed. It was a caricature of a railroad. Then, the on the third iteration, we simply decided to get rid of almost anything, keeping only what was required to operate realistically the prototype. I've never looked back since then and never added new sidings even if the temptation was sometimes quite high. In fact, when I compare that to TOMA, I'm just surprised - even if implied by Joe and his team - that someone could be entirely content with it's first module.

@Jim: I'm quite happy with the Richwood track plan. I'll let it settle down for a while and revisit it later. After many verification with a few railfans in the area and sifting through old timetable, it became evident that Erie didn't run any passenger trains there, only a way freight and some extra. When I discovered that, I felt staging and other gimmicks weren't really required. In that case, knowledge of the prototype took off some anxiety about running too much trains I can't handle.

Matt

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## Jack -- Pesky Maps

Sun, 2018-01-14 18:33 — James Six

I wasn't sure if there wasn't a power plant back in the day. Many towns the size of Sturgis did. In this case, turns out it was a hydro powered plant. Oh well . . . I am changing history. The prototype guys will murder me!



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## Matt -- power plant

Sun, 2018-01-14 18:34 — James Six

Twin 50 MW generators are perfect for Sturgis back in those days. I did my research on this well. My operations will match.



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## Don Hanley - staggering.

Sun, 2018-01-14 20:02 — TomJohnson

Hi Don. I read your post about staggering using the 0-5-0 method. I also do the same and try doing this on a non operating day. My staggering is seven really nice display cases with clear sliding doors. My rolling stock stay dust free this way and you can also see what you have and what hasn't been placed on the layout in quite a while. I think having no staggering on the layout is OK. I'm modeling a small branch line that has become a short line and I don't need staging for the kind of trains I run (one train a day out and back). If you're careful, you won't damage your rolling stock. One thing I do before staggering is wash my hands so they are not greasy. I used to wear latex gloves but found those darn things can get caught on a detail and break it off. No issues with my bare hands. Taking this a bit farther, my track is very simple. I do have about 100 feet of running room which is a lot but the whole layout is very narrow and highly scenicked and detailed. I have about 20 to 30 feet of running room between three towns (you didn't see that on your visit). My three towns are simple. What I mean by that is each town only has an average of about 3 to 4 switches. I don't put in spurs going off into all direction just to add operation. I try to follow the prototype. The real railroad branch lines in my area in small farm towns only had a run around and maybe just one spur to an elevator. That same spur may also serve a fertilizer facility. In my town of Kewanna, I have a long run around, a long spur to my Farm Bureau Coop Elevator, and a second spur to a feedmill for animal feed that is delivered to local dairy and hog farms. That's it! In Lucerne, I have a spur to a transloader also for feed, a spur to an elevator and fertilizer facility. There is also another track for team for whatever I need it for. It

takes me about 2 hours to operate running at speeds of 10 to 15 mph. So, much like one town layouts I sort of do something similar with a three town layout but very narrow and simple. I probably have just as many switches in three towns as some may have in a one town layout. Mine is just stretched out! I like the KISS method personally.

Tom Johnson in Kewanna, IN

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Concrete elevators.

Sun, 2018-01-14 20:02 — TomJohnson

I'm a bit late with my responses to this blog. I enjoyed reading the many posts about concrete elevators and when they were built. Yes, Jim is correct about when they were built. The Buckeye Elevator he shared a photo of was indeed built way back in the twenties. This elevator is only about five miles from my house. My father in law was a local farmer for many years and was very young when this elevator was built. He's told me many times it was there in the 1930's for sure. He always called it the biggest elevator in the country. He also said that about Thornehope Elevator north of Logansport on SR35. Most elevators however were wood with corrugated metal siding or just all wood in Indiana.

Tom Johnson in Kewanna, IN

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## Power Plant

Sun, 2018-01-14 20:59 — fecbill

I took worked in the power industry for 20 years so although areas (note plural because I am not decided yet) I am interested in do not have a power plant. Two areas I am interested in do have power plants (one of which I worked at) but those are larger plants and not in the town.

Oh I will have a coal fired power plant but it will be small and more like a municipal plant or very early power company plant.

I am actually considering a town called the GST - Generic Southern Town - based on a real town but with modelers license. Railroad? which ever Southeastern one I decide to run that day 🤔. Branch type or secondary line with single or at most two trains with single road switcher or 2-8-0.

Bill Michael

Modeling GST, generic southern town, circa 1950-62

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## GST

Mon, 2018-01-15 10:12 — sailormatlac

Bill, I like this idea. The more I learn about small rail-served town across the continent, the more I become convinced they have more in common than difference.

I often thought one could build a generic town with a certain flavour (in your case Southern-influenced) following a track plan based on a prototype just to get the things right (realistic spacing between buildings, plausible location, track arrangement) and call it a day. The idea is not to be bound to any real location, but rather to build something that looks right and operate well.

And since most modellers love to build stuff, I think one could make different versions of rail-related building (main the depot) with paint scheme suitable for a few railroads. All would fit the same footprint, they could even be the same buildings but in different colors. You run Southern one day, then put the Southern depot in place. Next day is Central of Georgia, so it be. It wouldn't take more time than swap a few cars before an operation session.

Matt

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## Tom, I always thought you

Mon, 2018-01-15 10:18 — sailormatlac

Tom, I always thought you found a clever way to recreate a complete branchline with a decent long mainline without filling the basement. These nice narrow shelves you use are incredibly well suited to model a railroad which is nothing more than a very, very long line across the landscape and often contained within lines of trees. And judging from your photos, these narrow shelves don't have that much effect on taking great photographs in a realistic manner.

Out of curiosity, what is your average shelf width?

Matt



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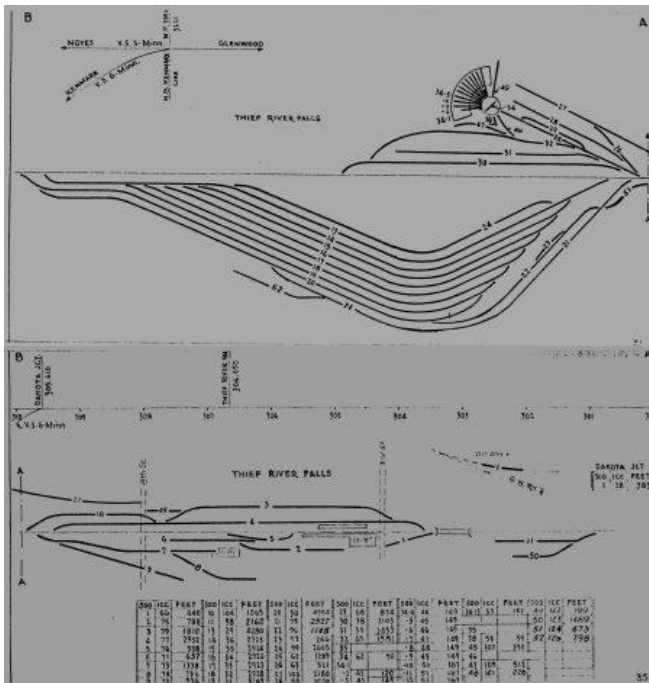
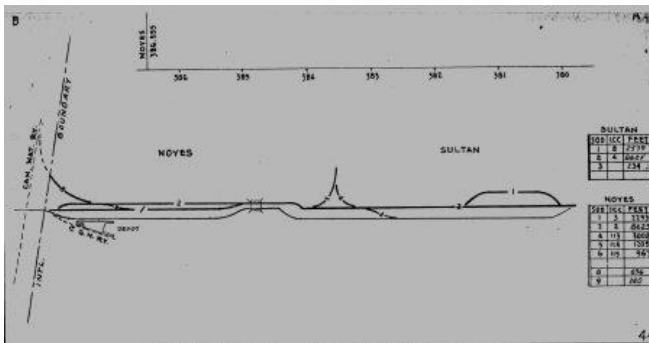
## Hi Jim: Attached are the

Mon, 2018-01-15 17:24 — BOK

Hi Jim:

Attached are the Soo maps for Thief River, the yard and Noyes.

Barry



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## In the interest of

Mon, 2018-01-15 17:44 — Virginian and L...



In the interest of maintaining this excellent thread I was thinking about my own ideas for a layout. In some regards it would be considered a basement filler, although I was going to stay with the one town idea in spirit. You see I was going to do two towns that were butted up against each other. Now I have lots of the things like buildings and freight cars for the layout, I have been buying them over the years. I also have many more cars than Jim is using on his Midwestern branch already in my possession. I believe I have nearly all the locomotives I will need but I might add one more and get rid of 4 others, but I am not sure yet.

For me the roster changes will reflect upgrades in quality not replacement of wrong types. Fortunately I have made my choices for a specific era and and stayed with that for my entire time in the hobby, same thing with scale and gauge so no issues with that.

Now I have also wanted to model the same place for the entire time I have been in the hobby. I have had a different take on things several times between strictly prototype, to completely fanciful, to my present interest something between the two.

I have decided I will keep many names for industries that were in place and try and keep them in the same general order. They will have existed before the time period I model and instead of them being allowed to go out of business I will have them remain prosperous.

I will put together some basic foot prints for the layout bench work and share the idea with the industries that will go in there. I have also decided to make sure I can keep all turnouts if possible near to the front edge of the bench work. Right now I am looking at different widths for things with the maximum reach being 30 inches from the edge and in some areas it might be as little as 12 inches in depth.

I will post more along this line later on and I hope to try several versions, each one successively smaller than the previous. Some other things to consider in this regard are lots of staging and the ability to run somewhat long trains. I am working on a length of 50 cars plus caboose and motive power.

more later.

Rob in Texas

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## I have long felt that many,

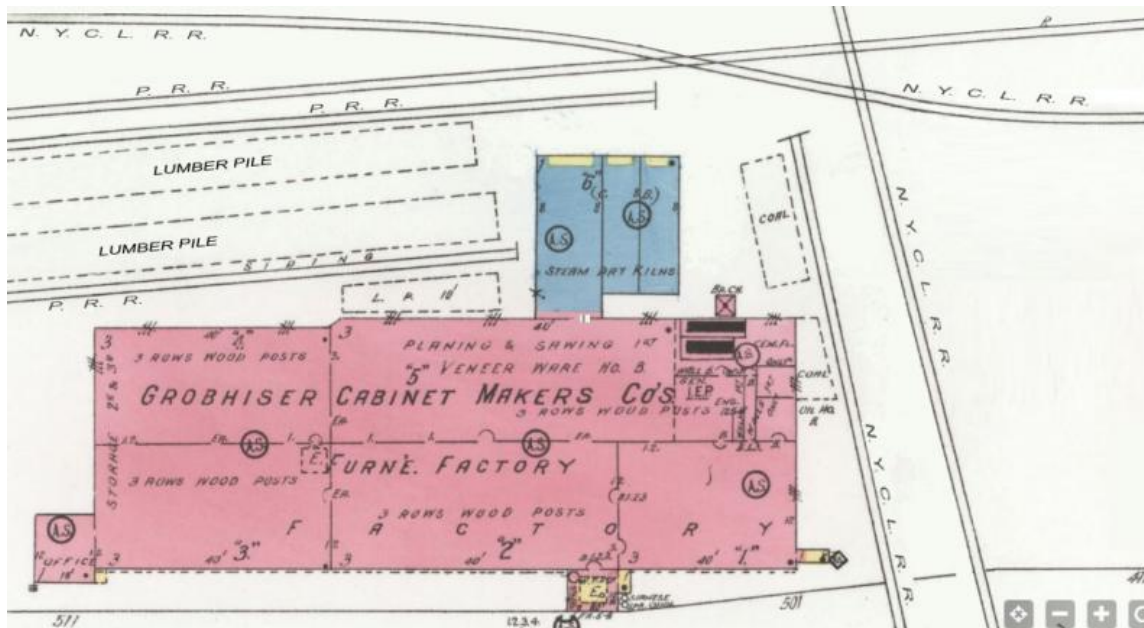
Mon, 2018-01-15 18:04 — James Six

I have long felt that many, if not most model railroaders try very hard to fit as much into their given layout space as they can. This has long been the "norm" for too many of us. For years that would have described my approach to layout building. No longer.

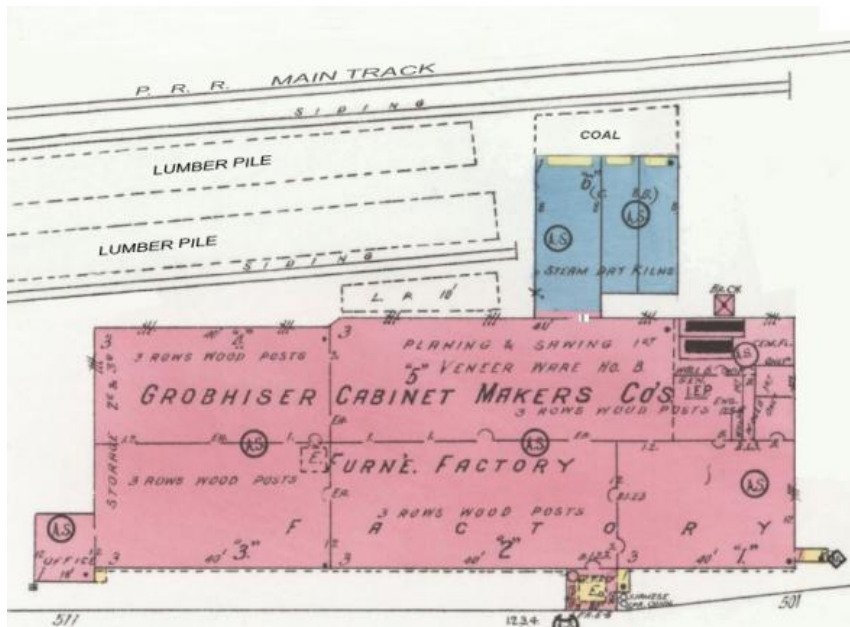
Today my basic design philosophy for layout building is to include as little as is needed to meet the goals and objectives for the layout. This makes perfect sense and believe me, it works and works well. However, there is a catch. That is, in order to pull this off you need to have goals and objectives before starting the layout design process. I am afraid to say that most of us start the design process without established goals and objectives.

i have been building layouts since I was 5 years old. The year was 1953! So please understand that my words are not without considerable experience that includes both success and failures. Yes, some of my layouts have failed. Even the layouts I at first liked, I soon grew disenchanted with them. That said, I will admit right now that that I never had any real goals or objectives for any layout before the one that I am building now. Even with my present layout my goals and objectives were developed as I preceded with building they layout. This has caused me to make serious changes to the layout including abandoned half the layout to be torn out and replaced with a design the meets my present goals and objectives.

Back to the question of how much track to include. Below are two images of a Sanborn map. The top one is exactly per the prototype in 1923. The lower map is one that I modified to show what you could do and still have the factory to service by your railroad.



In this second map I have removed the NYC tracks from the map and moved the coal shed to the PRR side of the factory. This significantly cuts down on the amount of track and makes having this factory doable on a one-town layout.



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## Plant

Mon, 2018-01-15 20:15 — sailormatlac

@Rob, this is an interesting goal you have set to yourself. In one way you are blessed having a very defined idea of what interest is, which is also a curse since it becomes harder to make show... Been there, done that... and still there! ;-) But I'm pretty sure it will at least be an interesting exercise that will help you define what Jim called "goals and



objectives". If I learned something during my architectural training, it's that a project gets better when you find out it's core elements and build around it. You can have ten great ideas, but put together they don't means nothing and can even negate themselves. As they say "jack of all trade, master of none". Find what is important for you and is the soul of your project, then make it shines.

@Jim, neat exercise. Most people would consider it a crime to not model the sweet double diamond since it would be an instant signature scene. But in the long run, it would have no purpose when running the layout and could be a distraction from the main subject. On the other hand, the way you altered the reality doesn't really change the track density while making it fully rail-served from a layout perspective. Not only you keep all the interesting features, but you organize them in a way that would make sense in real life. Some other modellers would have kept everything and maybe made the plant smaller to fit all the track. In my sense, it is far more important to keep the structure as it was to keep the balance the industry and the railroad. Anyway, in real life, it wouldn't be surprising if five years later, coal was delivered by the other railroad and the siding made longer to suit the customer's needs.

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>

Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>

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## Use of space

Mon, 2018-01-15 20:58 — Don Hanley

Jim, Rob

I am following somewhat along the same thought process. Too many modelers try to place the preverbal 10 gallons into a 5 gallon container. On my layout I have divided it into two switching sections, that are separated by a small downtown section. I have also laid out blocks and lots for housing, to further separate industries creating more visual separation in the scene.

As for modeling a specific town and its industries I have taken a lot of liberties on my layout. I don't think that it's necessitate to limit yourself to just the industries located in the specific town of your choice. I did however limit myself to industries and companies that are within a 30-40 mile radius of the town I am modeling. I have brought in industries and businesses from Fort Wayne, Decatur, and Huntington, IN to my modeled town. The key to maintain credibility is to keep the style of the structures and the types industries that are within the area you are modeling.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## update on the project from

Mon, 2018-01-15 21:30 — Virginian and L...

update on the project from 1891.



### *Bridge Under Construction*

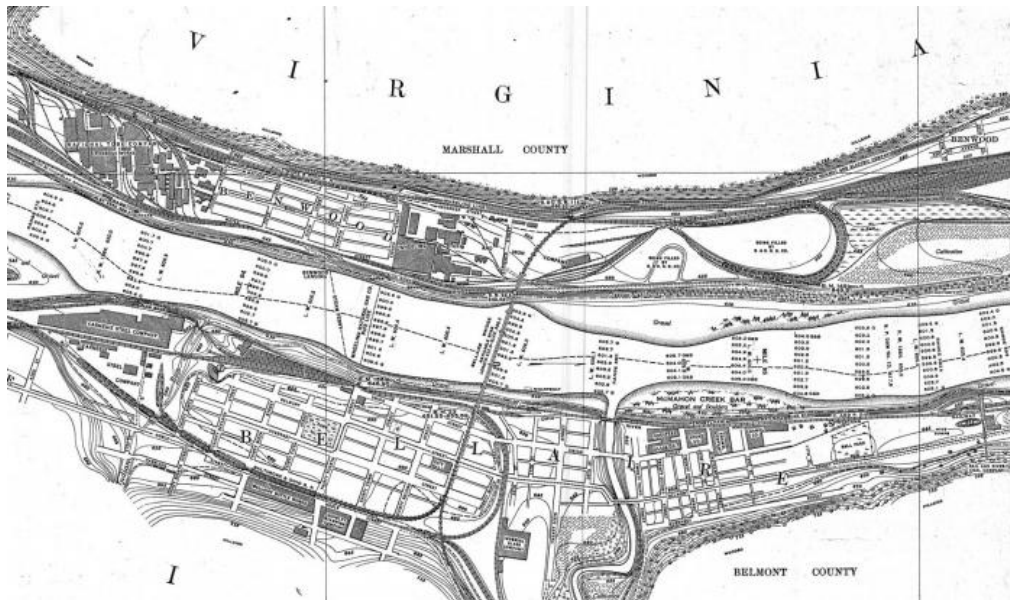
— from "Once A Week: An Illustrated Weekly Newspaper," February 3, 1891, Vol. VI, No. 16,  
Published by P.F. Collier, New York.

*"THE WHEELING, W. VA., BRIDGE AND TERMINAL SYSTEM. The bridge and belt line system of railways, illustrated in this issue (see image to right - click to enlarge), at Wheeling, W. Va., are approaching completion. First there was to be a line from Cornelsville to Wheeling. Second, a line from Bowerston, Ohio to Wheeling. Third, a double-track bridge over the Ohio at Wheeling.*



*Forth, a belt line of road around the city of Wheeling, and connecting with every road in the city. All these things were to be built on the union principle—that is, any road wishing to do so might use all or any part of any of the lines or the bridge for a certain rental per annum, or per car of freight transported. The forty miles of road from Wheeling to Bowerston are to tap a dozen short lines now running from the lake to points within easy distance from the new union line and bring them all to Wheeling. The prime feature of the system is, however, to connect the city of Wheeling with Martin's Ferry, just across the river, and bring all the lines that end there now into the city and furnish for them independent switching facilities and terminal connections. The main system includes ten and one-half miles of track, beginning at the upper end of Martin's Ferry and continuing across the river, through three tunnels to the extreme south of Wheeling, and connecting with the Wheeling & Lake Erie, Pittsburgh, Wheeling & Kentucky, Cleveland, Lorain and Wheeling, Cleveland and Pittsburgh, Ohio River, Baltimore & Ohio, and Panhandle railroads. The three tunnels are 537 feet, 1,203 feet, and 2,406 feet long, respectively. The Ohio is crossed by a bridge 2,097 feet long, double-track throughout and built with five spans, one 152 feet long, one 525 feet long, and three 250 feet long. The approaches are 317 feet and 353 feet, respectively."*

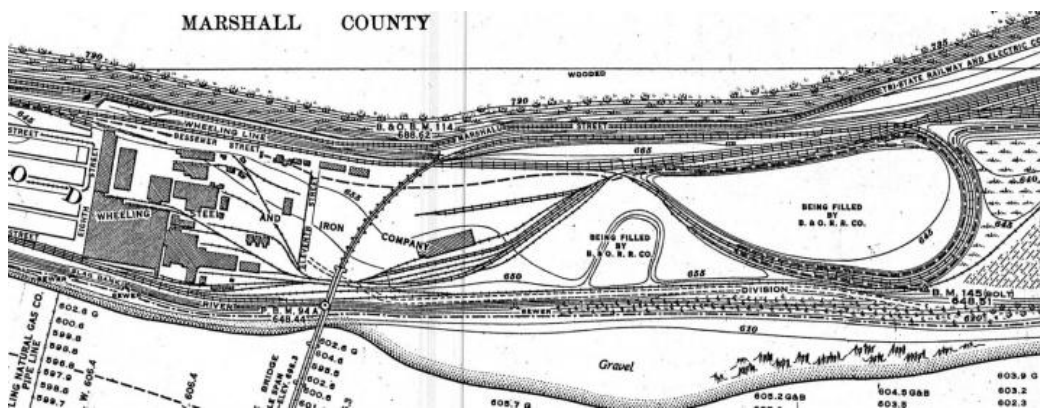
The section above describes the reason and the area of the railroad lines in the city. Many of the individual lines were merged into two principal lines, The B&O and The Pennsy. So even though the description above sounds like a lot it will be something that fits in well with the one town approach being less than ten miles in length. So next post I will make a list of industries that will be served by the railroad, but for a teaser let me add a post from my delving into the past blog where I cover lots of history of the area.



Now from the above relationship we can see that the wheeling steel plant is right next to the yards which was likely very convenient for them. Also under ground behind the mill was a major coal seam that has been mined for over a hundred years and until it's recent closing was one of the top 25 producing mines in the United States. There is still lots of coal in the mine it has just recently gone to the Ohio County line and could likely produce for another 100 years easily.

Note the bridge crossing the Ohio River in the map above was used in the movie about a runaway train with Denzel Washington.

## UNSTOPPABLE Sparks Flying at Stanton Curve (Bellaire, OH)



Here is an additional look from 2014. The stacks are remnants of the steel mill that is in the area of the railroad bridge, the multi span bridge on the large stone piers, and the only bridge in place in 1914 to 1916 era in which the map was made.

For more check out my delving into the past blog link in my signature.

I do talk about modeling the area in the blog but also have decided to change some of my standards for track centers and other things after examining some things from the NMRA website, that have been shared via this website. Even though there does not seem to be a real big use for the organization as there was prior to the majority of standards being adopted it is still a wealth of very useful information.

Rob in Texas

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concept and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Don -- Use of space

Tue, 2018-01-16 09:41 — James Six

Don, I believe your thinking and mine are closely in tune.

While I admit that if I had the Sanborn maps of Sturgis MI when I started designing the layout my layout would more closely match the real Sturgis, at the same time I feel no compulsion to match the prototype with any exactness. For instance, there was no power plant on the outskirts of Sturgis, but there will be on my layout. Some prototype purists may have serious indigestion at the thought of this "heresy", but that is their problem and not mine.

The prototype is a "guide" that I will follow as well as I reasonably can in the space available and to convey the "feeling" of the prototype. This all goes hand-in-hand with not crowding and with spreading things out -- which is needed to switch in real time. So, I include only enough of the prototype to do what I want to do in my layout operation and at the same time to provide a good "feel" of the prototype that I am representing. Note that I used the word "representing" and not "modeling".

Wow! That was a mouth full! If y'all didn't tell it, please read it again. This is the core to all of my modeling. It is key to anything and everything I do in model railroading.

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## Rob -- Bridge Under Construction

Tue, 2018-01-16 09:49 — James Six

Wow Rob. You are an ambitious person. I hope that you have lots of real estate to build your layout along with lots of hobby time and lots of resources!

LOL 🤔



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## Jim, I figure I should have 20

Tue, 2018-01-16 11:00 — Virginian and L...



Jim, I figure I should have 20 years possibly more. If I do not finish it before I expire that is ok as I am about the journey not the destination. I will enjoy the process I suspect more than the completion, but if I do complete it the result will be what I wanted.

Most of the rolling stock, locomotives and structures are all ready in my possession. I will be looking at a structure to house it which I will build myself. The structure will be considerably smaller than 1/2 a basement. I also have a great deal of track but in checking the prices quite a lot can be purchased for \$1000.00. Now that sounds like a lot but when one saves up the hobby budget and does not need to buy everything it is within reach. That is I think the biggest benefit of my having the same vision or very close to it for my entire time in the hobby. I was most fortunate in knowing what I wanted to do with out so many changes that most folks seem to go through. It does not make me better just more fortunate.

The idea of multiple decks makes it easier to fit the layout into 1/2 or if staging is counted 1/4 of the foot print if all on one level. Designing for simple wiring, building turn outs, and taking the frugal instead of cheap approach should make things much cheaper than would otherwise be the case. One other thing to consider regarding structures, steel mill structures are often large metal sided structures with out lots of detail. A big foam core or plywood core covered with printed paper or some other means of representing metal siding is rather cheap when one looks at the size of these things. As to the Ashland steel series I bought them when they were nearly 1/2 price on a sale from Walthers, same with my engine terminal all were picked up on sale.

Having the skill to do all of the work myself is another plus that from what I have read most folks are unable to do this for themselves. They are often very good modelers but not ready to frame, wire, plumb, insulate, and roof, a structure. It also helps I have the needed tools for a project.

We do see many layouts under construction on these pages that are not overly large and many will be larger than mine. I suspect when I begin the layout planning on these pages in a very simplistic form there will be lots of good suggestions

from others that help me a great deal.

I know your talking about the one town approach has convinced me to eliminate, Martins Ferry, Glendale, Moundsville, PPG, Mobay, Allied Chemical, New Martinsville, and quite a few other places that would have made the layout less appealing than the one town approach. Instead trains that leave the visible layout to go to these places get made up in the yard and go to staging.

Wow I said a lot! my apologies to all for going on to long but I am very passionate about the hobby.

Rob in Texas

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## One town, different location

Tue, 2018-01-16 12:14 — [dssa1051@yahoo.com](mailto:dssa1051@yahoo.com)

I think we have come to the consensus that a one town layout will work in granger country or other locations where agriculture played a significant role in the modeled industries. Will it work in other locations? I have Appalachian coal country in mind but I think it would be much more difficult. Has anyone out there tried a different location?

For someone who has a truly micro space see the September 1994 RMC for a trackplan based on a scrap yard in LA (no, not lower Alabama!) that used a Plymouth switcher which we now have from Walthers. Instead of one town it would be a one industry layout.

Robert

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## "Will it work in other

Tue, 2018-01-16 13:11 — [ctxmf74](#)

*"Will it work in other locations? I have Appalachian coal country in mind but I think it would be much more difficult."*

I don't think it would matter much (other than the scenery requiring more hills and trees) .There are towns everywhere that could suit various operating preferences. If you want lots of traffic variety choose a bridge line town. If you want coal mines model a coal branch. If you want engine service facilities model a shops town. etc. I think the main consideration is how much space do you have to fit the town in? Choose a town that can be done in that space.....DaveB



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## Robert -- One town, different location

Tue, 2018-01-16 13:47 — James Six

Robert,

I really don't believe that it matters what location your one-town would be located. Keep in mind that the one-town layout as I have presented it is intended to be modeled as a shelf layout although it will work for other types of small layouts. As such, your mountains would primarily be on the photo backdrop with some slight slope up to the backdrop. I feel that very

few model railroaders have mastered use of photo backdrops. Painted backdrops while artistic are not IMO overly realistic. Just my opinion.



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## Appalachian Coal

Tue, 2018-01-16 14:30 — fecbill

I believe that maybe not one town, but surely one larger mine or prep plant would comprise the same scenario, You could even use a bit of scenic approach through the "hollar" to get to the mine.

Bill Michael

Modeling GST, generic southern town, circa 1950-62

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## Brain Cloud

Tue, 2018-01-16 14:52 — Kriegswulfe

James,



I have read the four major threads/blogs you have running and I have to admit they are a gold mine of information from all of the posts and respondents. I have a bazillion questions but in my ignorance, I am unclear where to begin, or what are the correct questions to ask. I have a relatively small area to model in, 9' X 10', working in HO scale as I have had to move up from N Scale. My space available is pretty much set in stone so expansion would mean I get to move into the dog house. I am looking to do something in a Texas port of call area, choices being Houston Ship Channel, Galveston Island or Corpus Christie. I would love to work with two railroads, the MKT and the Texas Mexican. I understand about Rule #1 but then again I would like to do justice to some of the history of both Railroads working in the 1985-1995 era. The real life business density of these areas, to me, make designing anything a serious chore, hence not fun.

I am looking to make 4 individual 2' X 4' " modules " to start with that could later expand into 1 main track that would give an continuous loop ( shelf style layout ) when the full wall area is utilized. I am hoping to include 3-5 industries on the first 16 feet of linear layout space but things get a bit fuzzy here ( but already may be too many ). I freely admit to my railroad ignorance so please bear with me. I want some industries but having seen a few layouts that have track plans looking like a bowl of spaghetti was spilled both scares me and seems a bit overkill. Having read where more switches means more potential operating problems and cost, I am not looking to recreate switching puzzles or anything even near those.

I have made the " druthers " list but one of the things that eludes me is the skill or lack of experience that says what should or shouldn't be included, compressed or extended. where to expand or condense a location/scene? How do the experienced modelers gauge their specific layout compression ideas? I know experience is the great teacher and right now I am extremely lacking, but how do modelers determine what does or doesn't work with a track plan/layouts, like you were mentioning about an earlier version of the Sturgis plan. I do not want to try and build the layout two or three times even though I understand there is a learning curve. My old Sergeant Major always told me spend the nickle and go fist class, so before I get to any build stage I would like to have a real good understanding of what I am trying to create. Many thanks in advance for any and all information you can provide.

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## A Single Focus

Tue, 2018-01-16 14:57 — JC Shall



I think while Jim is focused on a single town (that's what he's modeling), I think you could just as easily title it as a *single focus* layout.

It really doesn't matter whether it's a town or a mine or some huge industry, or a railroad yard. It's a concept where a single place or subject can potentially be stretched out, i.e. with less compression. It can be more true to life. The operation can be as simple (or complex) as you want it. And it isn't required to fill your precious space with things like staging, or other towns or even mainline running. Just focus on a single thing and massage it for all it's worth.

-Jack

[Louisiana Central Railroad](#)

[The Louisiana Central Blog](#)

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## A couple of ways to look at

Tue, 2018-01-16 15:14 — Virginian and L...



A couple of ways to look at this approach.

Coal mine railroad. If one were to be using a similar space to the one James is using substitute the coal mine for the power plant. Add a couple more tipples but smaller along the way to the town. Have the town with a Marshalling yard, where coal is collected and made ready to go in the proper direction on the main line. In traveling past the bigger mine it could go into staging and represent other mines on the line. The section of staging away from the town is where empties are picked up and loaded trains with all coal classified for the same general direction go even if they go to multiple customers.

This is a scenario that would work well from 1900 to the 1970s and still be operating in a very similar fashion. It was not until the 1970s that unit trains became so prevalent as to change the operating practices everywhere. In some cases smaller mines shut down as they were unable to supply a unit train of coal based on the needs of a customer.

Early engines could be 2-8-0s, later 2-8-2s, 2-6-6-2s and 2-8-8-2s would be quite common depending on the grades and the railroad as some favored one type over the other. After the 40s one could expect to see diesels by all makers as they became available. Dynamic brakes would be very common as an option on coal roads but not everywhere.

The town could be anything from a company town to a county seat and designed accordingly. It would typically not be very deep away from the tracks and would likely climb the hill behind the tracks.

A section of a big city. Flats along the back drop with some structures near the tracks. Industry could be anything from your favorite urban location, and could include a port, a yard that is a transfer yard from one railroad to another etc. Again same space and similar track plan to Jim's posted earlier but only the scenery gets changed to protect the innocent.

One could think of it as a one event railroad. Suppose one wants to model the climb up Saluda mountain on the N&W. Have a place bottom and top for trains to arrive and helpers to be added. Once at the top a space for retainers to be set would mean a small yard or maybe 3 to 4 tracks for trains to wait. Same at the bottom to handle the trains now at the bottom of the hill so they can cool their wheels and release retainers. Other facilities would depend on the era selected but it would be slow speed and big power with shorter trains, things that often fit the model railroad better than the prototype.

If someone had a smaller space than what Jim is talking about in his plans one could just model what part fits the space available and use staging for the rest or omit it entirely. A very satisfying railroad will surely be the end result.

Rob in Texas

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — jamessix

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concept and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Re Appalachian coal mining

Wed, 2018-01-17 01:22 — Oztrainz

Hi Robert and all,

If you are modelling Appalachian coal mining prior to WW2, remember coal was sold by the car and sized before loading. For some historical stuff have a look at <http://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/magazine/mrh-2014-12-dec/build-fast-coal-loader> Fast loaders/Flood/loaders and unit trains came in from the late 1950's / early 1960's.

For hand-mined coal, in simple terms, in increasing [size of coal](#):

dust/fines/wheat => coke ovens (either captive to the mine or attached to offsite steelworks, etc)

Nut/Stove/Egg => domestic use, cooking/heating etc

Lump coal => industrial use - foundry/power/transport etc

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This is one of the reasons that the earlier tipples had multiple load-out tracks - to handle different sized coal for different customer types.

Technological changes in both mining and industry also affected coal sizes delivered by the mine over time as well, but that's a whole other topic.

In no particular order - incoming supplies to the mine for an isolated mine up the end of a valley:

- explosives
- limestone dust for dust suppression
- timber/steel for pit props/roof support
- machinery and parts
- oils and other lubricants - by the drum or by tanker for a larger mine
- brattice for ventilation control
- different diameter pipes for ventilation/compressed air and water control
- electrical cable for power/lighting
- steel rope for powered haulages/winders for shafts or inclines within the mine
- and probably a host of other stuff that I haven't thought of

Just some thoughts to get you started.

Regards,

John Garaty

Unanderra in oz

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## To expand on what John

Wed, 2018-01-17 06:57 — Virginian and L...



To expand on what John mentioned above.

The biggest determination of what type of coal was coming out of the ground depended on the mining equipment used. The size of the mine would often determine the type of equipment they had. A large mine would go to the short wall or long wall mining equipment that would produce a uniform type of coal size. Other mechanical means would still have coal blasted down in a more varied size.

In addition to size there were also variations in chemical composition of coal that would result in coal from different seams being blended to give the proper mix to various customers. So for a while coal would move in solid trains but would get classified and shifter to other customers along the route or blended when dumped into the hold of a ship.

Rob in Texas

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## A few locations would work

Wed, 2018-01-17 08:30 — Douglas Meyer

In the C&O mainline in the 1930-1950 timeframe in the New River Gorge in WV. The was typically a coal mine every mile to 2 Miles. In HO scale that is full scale of 60 to 120 feet between towns. It was actually possible for large mainline trains to be in two towns at the same time in some locations. Some mines were small most reasonable size and a couple very large, Kaymoor and Nuttleburg being two of the larger mines. The former owned by Berwind and the later at one point owned by Ford.

This short stretch also had two marshaling yards and a division point yard. As well as a town that had an interchange with a narrow gauge line.

Being very prototypical you could model the yard and town of Thurmond which had the buildings separated from the mainline by only a sidewalk (no road) as well as a large Station, a freight house, and a very large engine house that last two

cantilevered over the bank of the river. And just west of Thurmond a mile or two was the mine town/tipple of Fire Creak. Thus in a real distance of less then 5 Miles you get a town and a mine.

Alternatly you could just Model Sewell with its interchange to the narrow gauge Mann's Creak Railroad. The town had a huge number of Coke overs. An coal loader. The engine house for the narrow gauge. An interchange for wood from the Mann's Creak and of course and a lot of interesting switching.

There are many other interesting locations in WV such as Cass with its Sawmill, And the even larger town of Rainel (sp?) with the huge sawmill there and many other places that would work for a one town layout. In a sense my large layout is a handful of these locations strung together.

So this concept is doable for other locations. I think you could do this very well with a larger city such as Detroit in the same time. You would just need a LOT of structures. Picture the factories in Detroit during the lead up to WW2.

An inter urban/ street car would be another good example of what could work well,

So the principle the concept of concentrations on modeling one location and doing it well is applicable to many locations.

-Doug Meyer

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## More examples

Wed, 2018-01-17 10:03 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

To throw out a few more examples that were in my head are the various lines that came off the Southern's Rathole mainline. The K&T at Stearns, KY the Tennessee RR at Oneida, TN, and the Shay powered Brimstone RR at New River, TN. All three hauled coal in Southern hoppers with the Tennessee RR having the longest haul.

I've always thought a free lanced line based on one of these examples would be very believable. We all need about 3 lifetimes to accomplish everything we'd like to do. I have to admit I can't draw a layout plan from scratch. I can only modify someone else's plan.

Thanks again, guys

Robert

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## Robert -- More examples

 jamessix's picture


Wed, 2018-01-17 11:07 — jamessix

Robert, you and I are again of the same or very similar thinking. I believe that selecting a location/town to be the focus of the layout fits in very well with our one-town layout concept. This is the way to go for folks with limited layout space. If there is more space available add some scenery or staging. If there is still more space available add a second town!

James Six, modeling 1925-1935

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## Kirsch and Wilhelm factories

 jamessix's picture

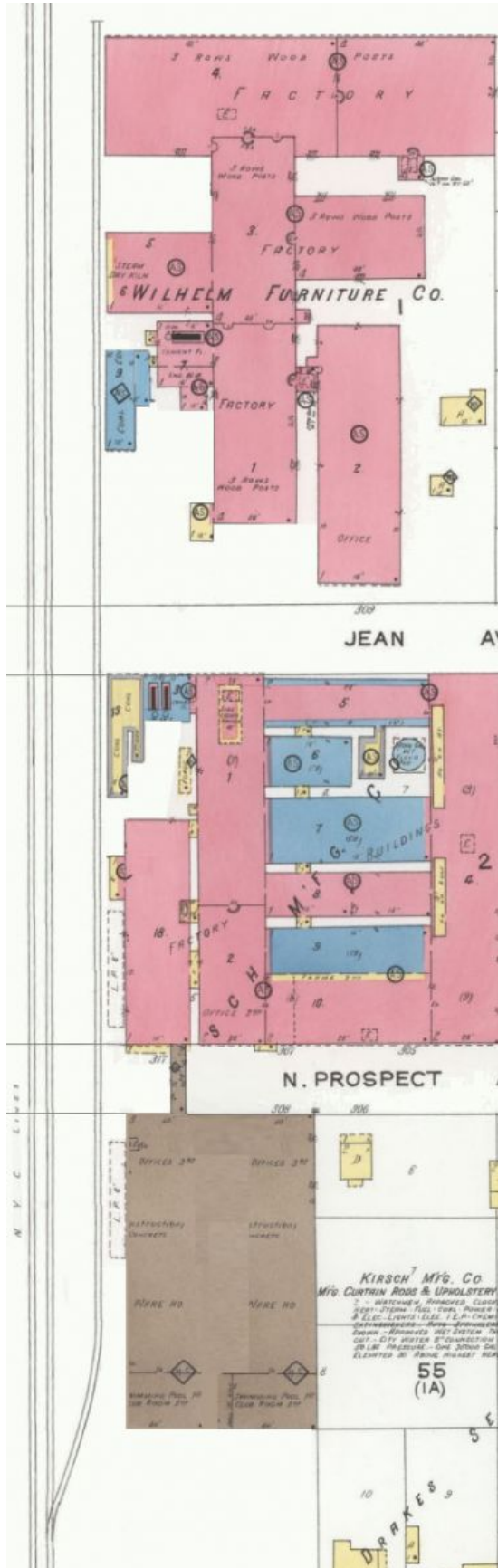
Wed, 2018-01-17 11:09 — jamessix

Here is another possible layout section devised from a Sanborn map. The top map is the original Sanborn map and the bottom is revised for incorporation into a layout. The layout version does not need the full size buildings. The depth of these buildings (left to right) can be cut off and shortened. I don't care fro building flats so I would retail about three or four inches

ob building depth. Note that both factories receive and consume coal. This seems to be the norm for factories of this era. Certainly makes layout operation more interesting.



Here is the modified version for inclusion on a one-town layout. Again, the depth of the factory buildings can be shortened. Where the prototype has a lot of curved track, I straightened it out for practical reasons for inclusion on a layout. The aisle would be to the left of the tracks. Note that there are two NYC main tracks. Just north of this area these tracks converge into one track (the one at the left).



I am a firm believer in basing layout track plans on Sanborn maps. This works exceptionally well for earlier eras. For modern times use satellite images to see where track and buildings are located.

James Six, modeling 1925-1935

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## Not exactly one town

Wed, 2018-01-17 12:02 — fecbill

but one theme would be the Yancey (formerly Black Mountain) railroad that interchanged with the Clinchfield at a place called Kona in the Blue Ridge mountains of NC. the line crossed the North Toe River then went to Burnsville, Micaville and Bowditch. Hauled mostly feldspar and mica from mines in the area. There was a Railroad You Can Model article in the August 1974 Model Railroader.

Bill Michael

Modeling GST, generic southern town, circa 1950-62

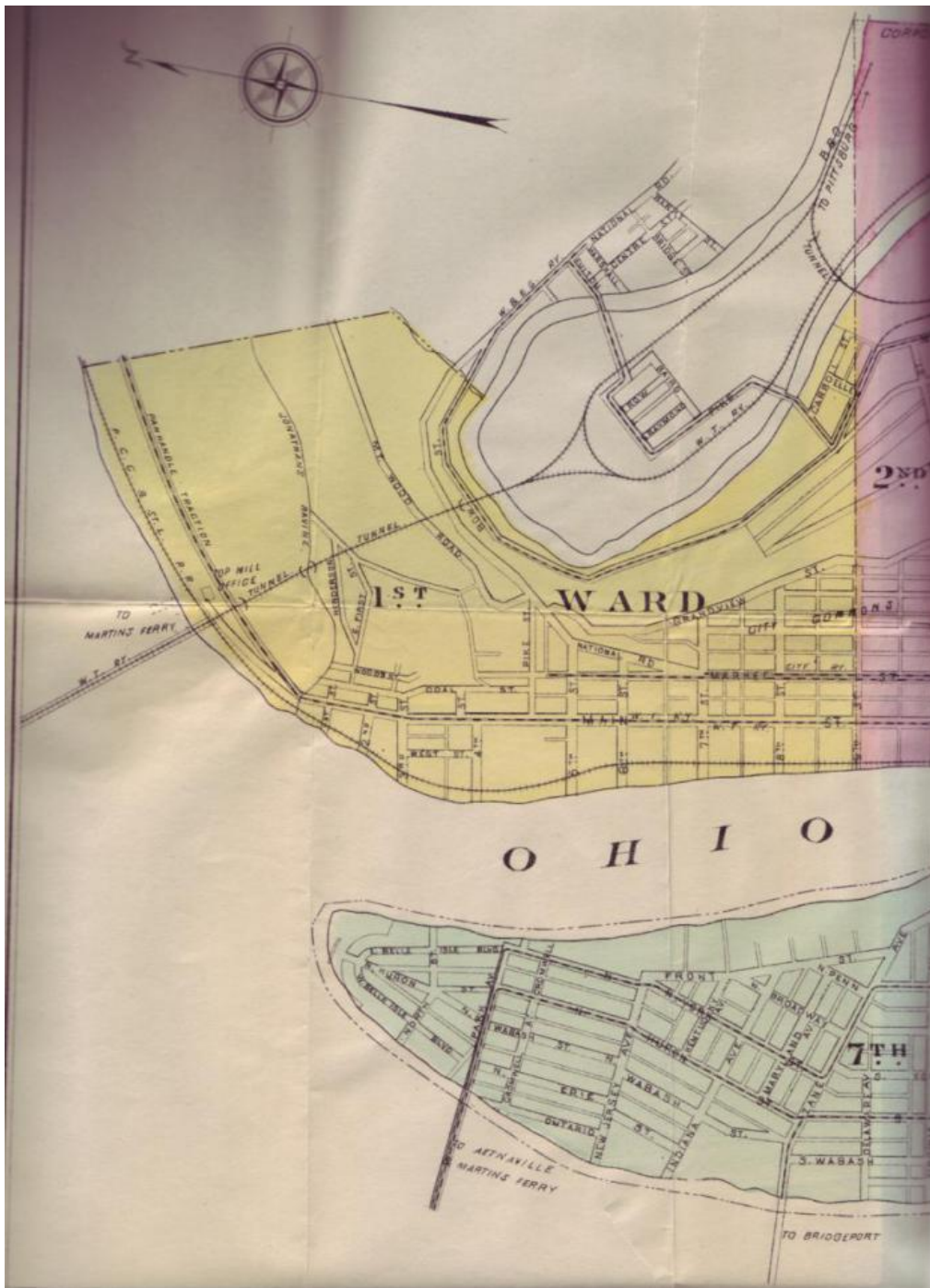
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## Some Sanborn maps of my town

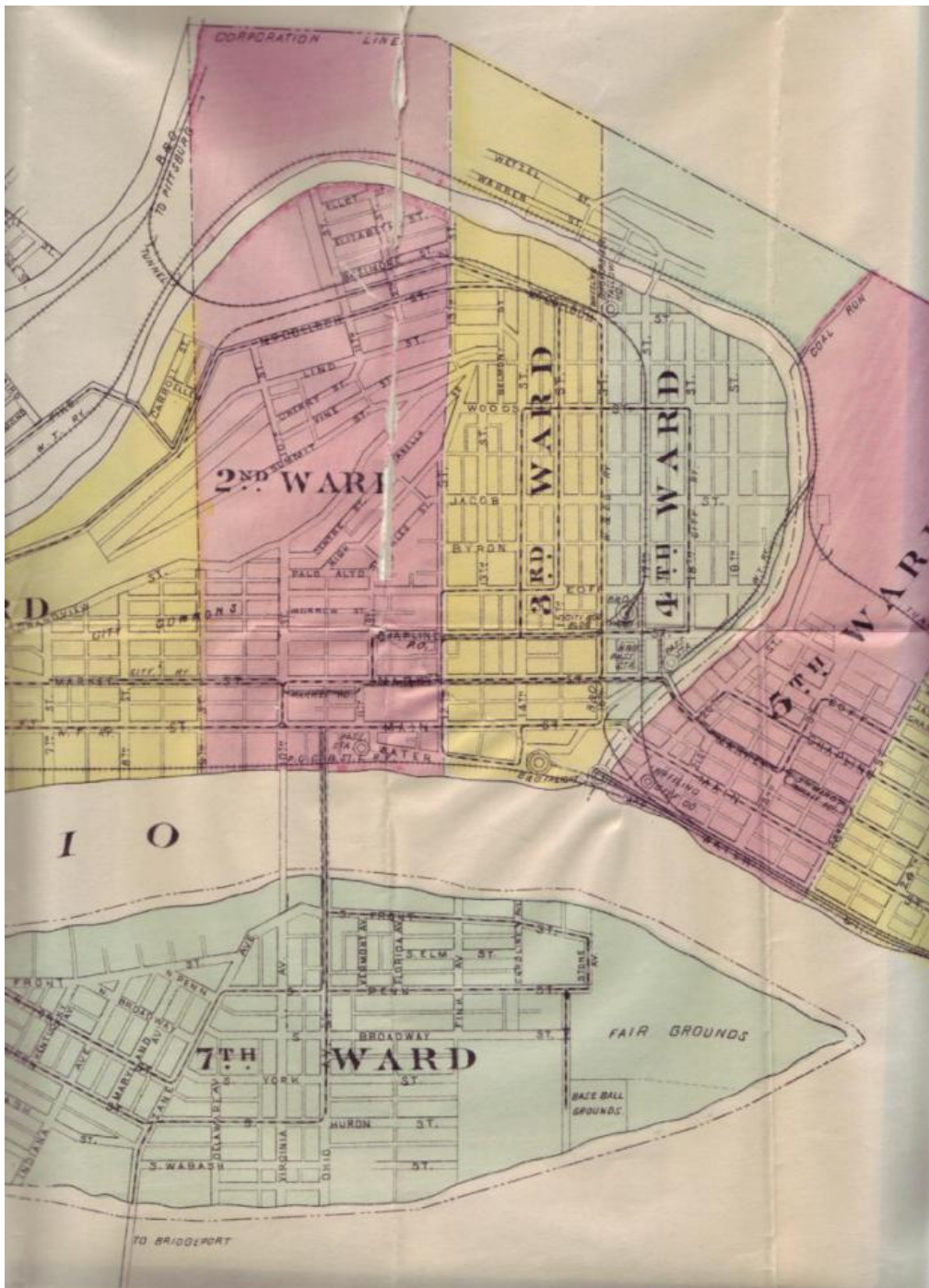
Wed, 2018-01-17 12:34 — Virginian and L...



Some Sanborn maps of my town in 1916. Many things remained the same for many decades. When I model the line I will be taking liberties with things so it can be kept in a linear plan with out lots of duckunders lift gates etc. Those things are fine to get into the room but not for operating a layout if they can be avoided.



Above shows the bridge from Martins Ferry and some connections. The maps will be posted in sections.



The seventh ward is an island in the Ohio River, when I started as a police officer it had 15,000 residents.



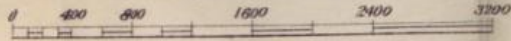
The waterway winding through the town is big wheeling creek.

R.L.Polk & Co's.

# CITY OF WHEELING

1916

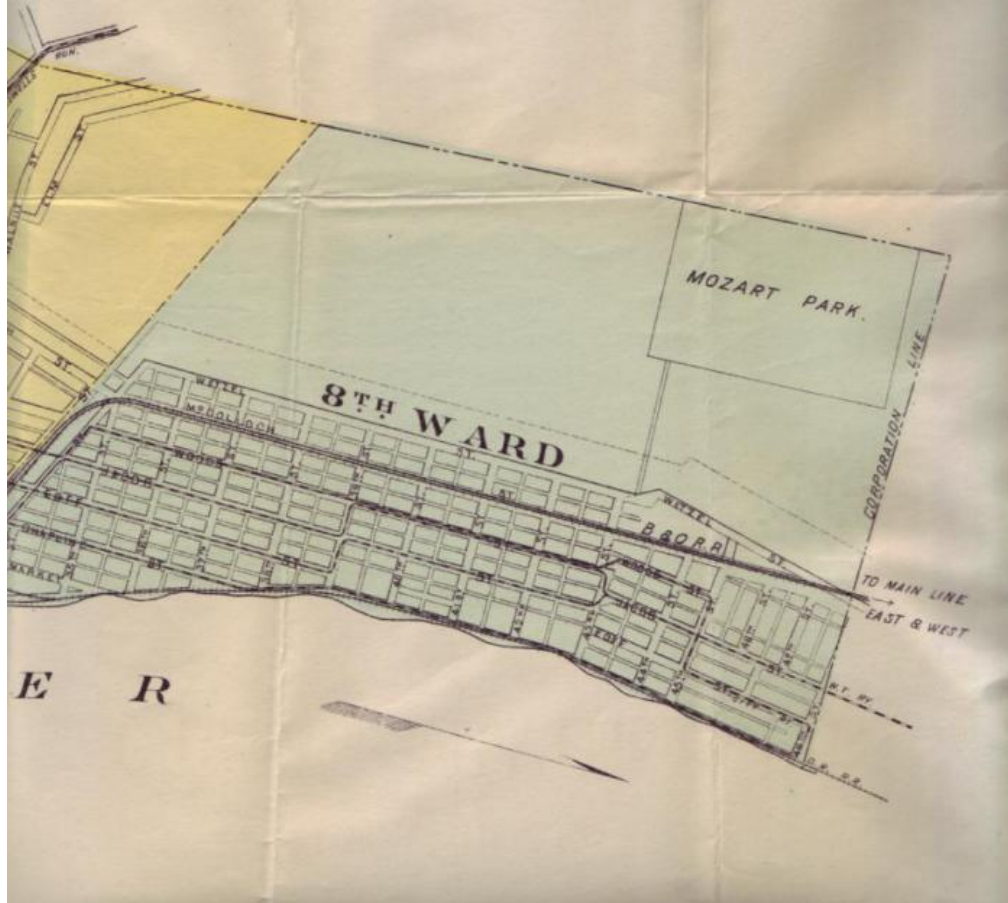
Scale 800 feet = 1 inch.



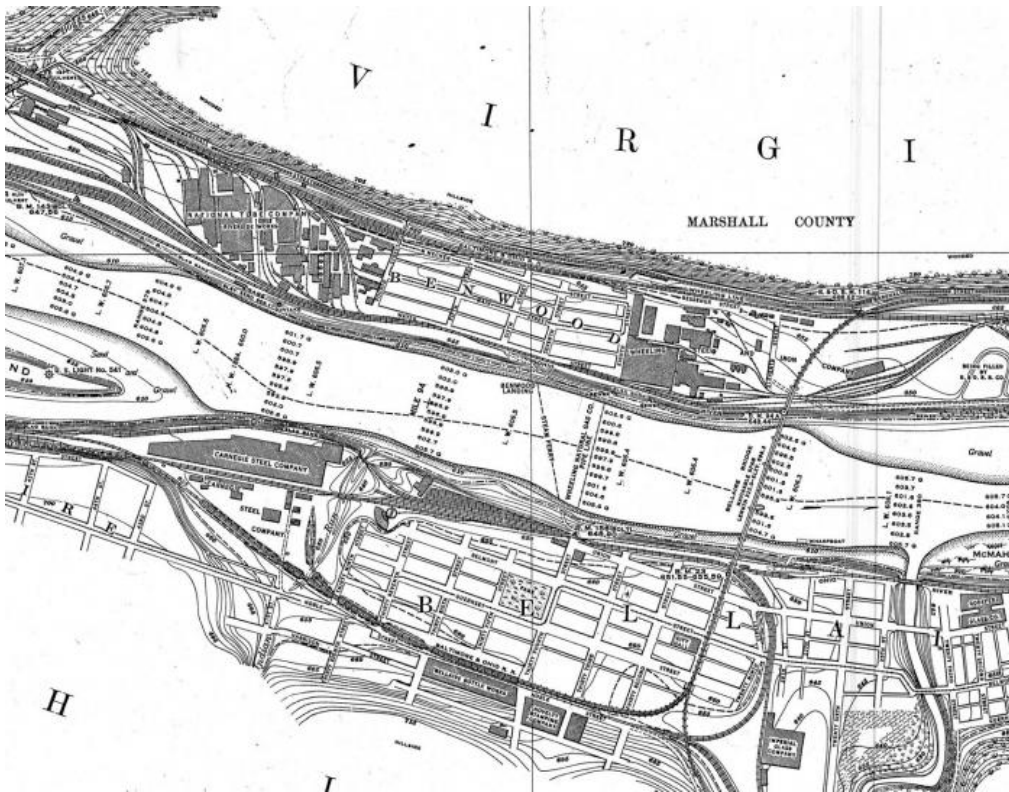
HOGG AND WHITE

*Civil Engineers & Surveyors*

*Copyright 1915 by R.L.Polk & Co.*



At the end of the map is the city of Benwood and the Wheeling Steel plant and the rail yards.



Here is a map of the area directly to the south of the Polk map (left most edge). The full width of the pages on the Polk map are about 1.25 miles long.

So Wheeling would be a bit less than 5 miles in length, and Benwood and the Yards about 4 most of which is the yard and the two mills.

Only nine miles to model if it is uncompressed. If some things not generating work for the railroad are omitted and the yard and some industry compressed a bit it should not be hard to fit it into a much smaller space than the required 540 feet to do it to scale. What if I could put together 200 to 300 feet of run on two levels say 100 to 150 per level? not sounding like too much now is it. In fact one might be able to squeeze it down some more and keep the flavor and have several signature scenes in a space that does not require a full basement.

Rob in Texas

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## Neat maps for Wheeling

Wed, 2018-01-17 15:20 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

Rob, I've been fascinated by the area around Wheeling but have never seen any old maps. Cool stuff!

It's difficult to realize all that was there as you zoom by on I-70.

Is the B&O your main interest in Wheeling?

My advice is to keep it small as long as you retain those signature scenes. You have tunnels that can be used to divide scenes. The bridge is a project in itself.

Robert

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## Sanborn Bashing?



Wed, 2018-01-17 15:33 — sailormatlac

Jim, thank you for providing worked out examples like these ones. It is interesting to draw a parallel with Lance Mindheim one-turnout layout concept he once published in MRH a few years ago. The two manufactures you've just shown and reorganized would keep someone busy with lot of interesting operation. The one-siding many industries scheme is always a winner in my book. And as you said, add the mandatory coal service to each customers and this can be turned into a neat layout. With such a strong customers core on a single siding, you don't need to add too much turnouts to create a great and satisfying layout.

And this is exactly why Sanborn maps are a great tool for layout designers since they are full of these efficient track plans. And they are fairly reliable when there is not too much track.

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>

Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concept and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### The B&O in Wheeling

Wed, 2018-01-17 15:51 — Grenzer47

Would be a great modeling subject and in fact I once did model part of it. One of the most appealing things about it to me is the twisting way the Pike from Pittsburgh enters from one end of town. Definite signature scenes include the exit from Tunnel Two, where the line almost immediately begins crossing a curving stone viaduct, also bridging the Wheeling Terminal. There's a lot of photos of this. After a bit of city running the line made a sharp turn and ran in the middle of 17th Street through town, emerging into the four track depot. The ground drops so that the north end of the depot is street level and the south end elevated above the streets. Right away the line enters another bridge. The depot is modest enough that I was able to model it in exact scale size, platforms and all. A good bit of train shuffling took place there, as well as originating and terminating. That depot was just too cool not to make it a focal point scene. Add some team tracks and industries and a local yard and you've got a lot of operating fun. Seeing as how the B&O is my favorite it all worked out well. Maybe I should start over and do it again, there's lots of material in my files.

Barry P.

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## Neat maps for Wheeling Wed,

Wed, 2018-01-17 20:34 — Virginian and L...



### Neat maps for Wheeling

Wed, 2018-01-17 17:20 — [dssa1051@yahoo.com](mailto:dssa1051@yahoo.com)

*Rob, I've been fascinated by the area around Wheeling but have never seen any old maps. Cool stuff!*

*It's difficult to realize all that was there as you zoom by on I-70.*

*Is the B&O your main interest in Wheeling?*

*My advice is to keep it small as long as you retain those signature scenes. You have tunnels that can be used to divide scenes. The bridge is a project in itself.*

*Robert*

Robert there sure was lots of neat stuff there. Now nearly everything is gone including most of the rails, they were coming out in the 80s. There were still some rails into Benwood when I was there in 2014. The map at the bottom Eric Hansmann sent to me to help with my modeling project.

I am free-lancing so I will rewrite history a bit but still include a B&O presence and a Pennsy presence. For additional information on the area I have a blog about the major industries along the line in my signature line. It includes info from internet searches and things Eric sent to me as well as photos I took in 2014 when I was there with my wife for a visit with her mother before she passed away.

There is I believe about 5 pages of info on the blog delving into the past.

My free-lanced line is the Virginian and Lake Erie, A connection of the Virginian with the Wheeling and Lake Erie. Rodgers who owned the Virginian also owned the Ohio River Railway which ran from Wheeling South to the area around Huntington WV. A large batch of Wheeling and Lake Erie Stock was owned by Rockefeller who was a friend and employer of Rodgers. It would not take a big stretch to connect the lines into a railroad that could compete with other carriers for traffic from the great lakes to the ocean.

So I will rewrite history a bit and keep things prosperous and model the part from the yard in Benwood to the first tunnel in Wheeling Hill as it crosses big wheeling creek.

Rob in Texas

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## Barry that depot presently

Wed, 2018-01-17 20:41 — Virginian and L...



Barry that depot presently houses a college. It was the largest Passenger Station in the State of WV.

I also have a file so to speak in my delving into the past blog on here and I suspect many folks would find info from your files and research very interesting, I know I would. It would really fit nicely with the theme of this blog as well as my blog on history. The link is in my signature line. Which part of the line did you model? I would love to see pictures if you have any of either prototype or your models.

You have an invite to post here or on my history blog.

Rob in Texas

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

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## Right-Of-Way and Station Plats for Minnesota

Thu, 2018-01-18 08:24 — captpete

If you are looking for Right-Of-Way and Station Plats for Minnesota the DOT has them mapped and geo-referenced (at least the ROWs) on their site: <http://mndotgis.dot.state.mn.us/rwmm/Map>. Click on Layers and turn off ROW Footprints and select ROW Rail Station Plats and ROW Rail Footprints, then open Basemap Layers and scroll down checking Rail Crossings and Railroads (they have both Active and Abandoned). You can then drill down and when you have the area of interest displayed click on Links and click in the area of the map you want to download.

I assume other States may have something similar to that so good Googling!

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## CaptPete -- Right-Of-Way and Station Plats for Minnesota

Thu, 2018-01-18 09:35 — James Six

Thanks for the info CaptPete!



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## Power Generating Plants (Oil not coal)

Thu, 2018-01-18 11:03 — captpete

Besides the Coal Plants some power companies used oil instead with a underground pipe run down to the track and a stanchion for a Tank Car. Here's a Plant at Milaca, MN a block away from the tracks.



I don't have an image of the trackside stanchion but a diesel era stanchion could work.

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## CaptPete -- Power Generating Plants (Oil not coal)

Thu, 2018-01-18 11:43 — James Six

That is awesome!!! It sure is modelable. I hope that someone sees this and models it on their layout. While I don't know the electrical output of the plant pictured, but I would suspect that is only 10 or 15, maybe 20 megawatts. I have to wonder what it supplied electricity to. This could have some interesting layout applications.

Thanks CaptPete



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## The other topic/blog

Fri, 2018-01-19 07:50 — James Six

Folks who are following this blog but not my other topic/blog titled "Modeling 1900-1940" may want to go there. We are currently discussing the application of Sanborn maps and other maps for designing our layouts. Lots of great information regardless of what era you are modeling.



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## How to fit a mile of scenery depty into 24 inches

Fri, 2018-01-19 16:09 — James Six

As you know, I am building a shelf layout. The depth from aisle to backdrop wall is 24 inches. Since I am modeling the somewhat flat Midwest I need to find a way to portray depth of field when viewing the layout. Here is how I do it. I use photo backdrops. I go out and take my own backdrop photos right here on location in northern Indiana. I print them on peel-and-stick photo roll paper, then apply them to my light blue painted backdrop sky. Follow the steps below.

1. Here is a scene that I am installing the photo backdrop to this afternoon. You can see at the left where a previous installation ended.



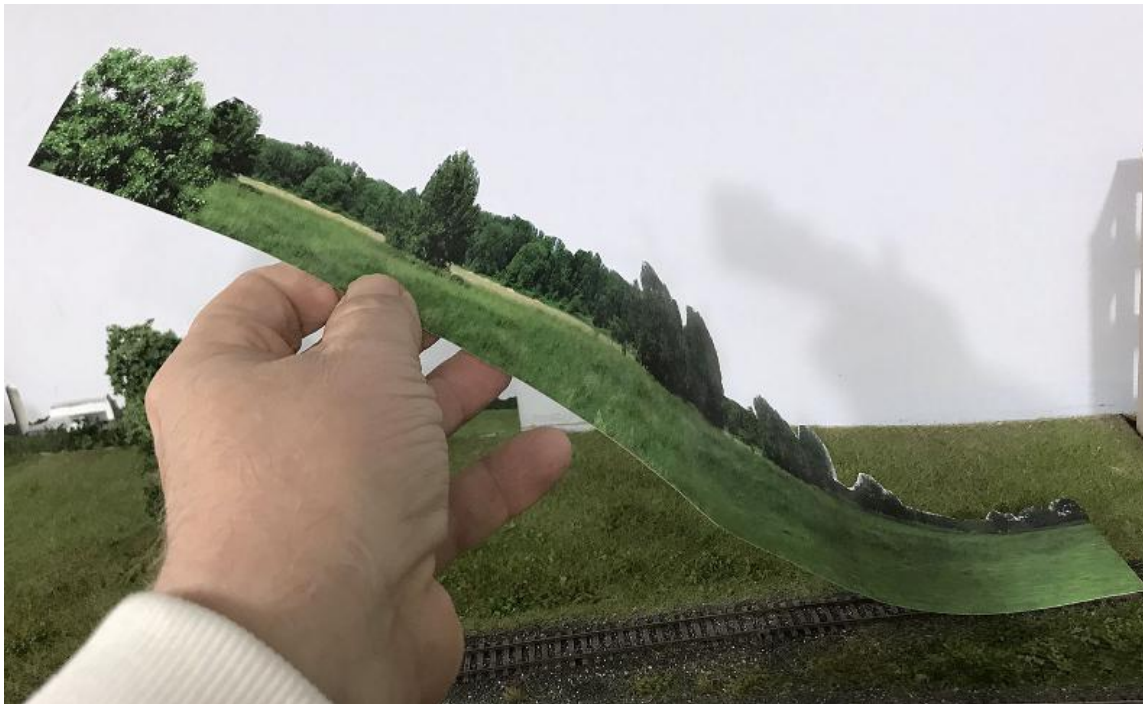
2. Here is a section of backdrop photo that I took using an iPhone 5s a few years ago.



3. The next step is to cut away the sky part of the photo along the top edge of the trees.



4. Here is the photo after cutting away the sky.



5. Here is what I mean by "peel-and-stick" photo paper. Peel the back off then position against the pre-painted backdrop sky and locate it where it will reside. Carefully press it against the backdrop wall.



6. Here is what it looks like once installed. Can you see where the older photo stops and the new one that was just installed starts? The splice was slightly overlapped and is located along the left edge of the tree just left of center in this photo.

Notice that nothing is "flat" or "straight". There is a slight roll to the land in both the photo backdrop and the actual layout scenery field. This lack of being flat and straight is crucial to achieving a realistic scene.



7. Here is the same scene at a skew angle. A few trees were added to the field on the layout in front of the backdrop



I welcome your comments and questions.



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## Matching the back of the layout



Fri, 2018-01-19 15:56 — p51

I model the Appalachian mountains and while model what the locals call, "bottom land", I rise the backs of the layout up and away, using undergrowth, trees and a long fence in one place to mask the difference.

I don't use painted or photo backdrops, I just cut profiles of hills in 1/2" MDF board (which stands up just fine on its own, using just a small angle to keep it upright at each end), painted and covered them in ground foam, and placed them in the back. Frankly, I think people way too strong an emphasis on backdrops as most layout visitors just don't look beyond the trains and horizontal elements of the terrain anyway. Only in photos does it become an issue and photo backdrops can look even goofier anyway. I dropped some blue into the 'sky' in one shot, but normally I just got with the white walls...





That said, modeling the plains presents some serious challenges. I'd have just lined small trees along the differentiation between the horizontal and the vertical.

**LEE**



<http://www.freewebs.com/wilysmb44/modeltrains.htm>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/53587910@N05/sets/72157668176638961>

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Lee -- Matching the back of the layout

Fri, 2018-01-19 16:00 — James Six

I like what I see in your photos. Where you and I are a bit different is that a big part of the hobby for me is to photograph the layout seeking as realistic looking of a photo that I reasonably achieve. Because of this I have to use photo backdrops. It is almost a personal contest for me to see just how realistic a photo I can achieve. Its just a bonus that visitors are often wowed too.



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- Another weathering project completed!
- IAIS Grimes Line: All Good Things...

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## Peel and Stick Paper

Fri, 2018-01-19 16:18 — JackM

I have used spray adhesive, I think it is called something like 777. It is a real bear to use and kind of a mess. You get one shot to get it on without bubbles, misalignment etc. I'll have to try the peel and stick paper. Thanks for the demonstration.

Jack

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## A Few Questions about the Backdrop



Fri, 2018-01-19 16:43 — JC Shall

Jim, I have only done the sky and clouds for my backdrop at this point. I'm leaning heavily to using this photo technique after seeing the results that you, Tom Johnson. Mike Confalone and several others have achieved with these. I've a few questions about your method.

Could you elaborate on your *Peel and Stick* photo paper? I wasn't aware of such a thing. Brand, model number, etc. would be helpful.

With regard to taking the photos: can you give a few tips on your technique? For example, how critical is the lighting, sun angle, etc., in other words, how do you match the photo to what you need on the layout? Also, how do you judge the distance to the subject? Any other tips would be appreciated.

-Jack

[Louisiana Central Railroad](#)

[The Louisiana Central Blog](#)

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## I like what I see in your



Fri, 2018-01-19 16:47 — p51

*I like what I see in your photos. Where you and I are a bit different is that a big part of the hobby for me is to photograph the layout seeking as realistic looking of a photo that I reasonably achieve. Because of this I have to use photo backdrops. It is almost a personal contest for me to see just how realistic a photo I can achieve. Its just a bonus that visitors are often wowed too.*

I guess it has to do with what you really see. In the mountains, you really don't have anything to see but the immediate foreground. I spent a lot of my youth going up and down those hills on visits to the area (all my family other than Mom, Dad and my brother lived there, growing up).

On the plains, you're going to see a long way off even without a vantage point. I've driven across that part of the country twice. Man, you start thinking you'll never see any terrain other than 100% flat ever again, after a while. You can see a storm coming sometimes for hours before it gets to you.

"Up in them thar hills," you're lucky to see more than a hundred yards or so unless you're looking over cleared farmland, a road, or on top of a peak.

And for me, I want to model stuff that's actually there, not photos or paintings of it. I used to be a professional artist. I could easily post photos I've taken or paint a good scene and hang that on the wall instead.

I've seen plenty of photo backdrops that frankly look silly except from the *exact* angle the layout owner wants you to see it from. I very rarely have to worry about the backdrops not matching the angles of the layout when i ant to shoot a photo.

I can't recall ever seeing any visitor to any layout I've been to being "wowed" by a photo backdrop, except to ask how much it cost to get it printed.

LEE



<http://www.freewebs.com/wilysmb44/modeltrains.htm>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/53587910@N05/sets/72157668176638961>

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## Great tutorial!

Fri, 2018-01-19 17:41 — TomJohnson



Great tutorial, Jim! Like Jim, I also use photo backdrops on my layout. I have one small section left that I painted by hand and added a 3D cornfield in front. I take my own photos, print them out on Premium Matte Photo Paper and cut them out along the tree line much like Jim. I don't use peel and stick paper. I spray the backs of my photos with spray adhesive or I'll apply Elmer's white glue to the backdrop where the photo will be applied. Both methods work well. The last thing I do is paint my modeled scenery with oils from the photo backdrop out away from the photo by about an inch or a bit more. I try to match the colors in the photo perfectly with my oils to the modeled scenery. By doing this, you can create seamless transitions from modeled scenery to photo backdrops.

Tom Johnson

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## INRAIL -- Great Tutorial

Fri, 2018-01-19 17:37 — James Six

Tom (INRAIL) and I have been close friends for more than a dozen years now. We share a lot of what we do with our layouts. While Tom may not have one town, I thing three), he really has a "one focus" layout as some of you brought up a few days ago. Just about the same thing. As Tom said we are both users of photo backdrops. Several years back I suggested to Tom that he do a road into the backdrop. Well, he has done several and in the process has mastered it as you can see in his photos.

Tom, you need to get our the leaf blower and clean up app those leaves all over everywhere!



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## Here are a few more transition to backdrop photos.

Fri, 2018-01-19 17:40 — TomJohnson





Tom Johnson

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## Leaf Blower?

Fri, 2018-01-19 17:45 — TomJohnson

I've been looking for one in HO scale for quite a while! LOL!!! As Jim said above, we've been close friends for years and feed off of each other. Jim got the photo backdrop thing rolling and I took off on it with my own tweaking that met my needs on a finished layout. It is much easier dealing with them on a layout in it's beginning stages.

Tom Johnson

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## Photo backdrop

Fri, 2018-01-19 17:49 — Art Kuperstein

Jim, great results with the photo selection, printing, excising and applying! Tom's are wonderful as well.

Jim, I don't remember which paint you chose for your backdrop sky. Could you share that please.

Any thoughts on using the photo peel stick paper in an unheated garage environment? Range is approximately 35 degrees F - 75 degrees F.

cheers,

Art

Art Kuperstein  
Editor - M&PRRHS Timetable  
M&PRR c.1949  
Langhorne, Pa.  
My MPRR website-  
<http://maparr.weebly.com>

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## JC -- A Few Questions about the Backdrop

Fri, 2018-01-19 17:56 — James Six

I will try to answer your questions.

1. The peel-and-stick photo paper. I had a friend print that for me. He is a semi-commercial printer. I don't know where he got the print paper of what brand it is. I will find out and get back to the group.
2. The photography, . . . I sometimes use a digital camera (no expensive SLR) and sometimes I use my iPhone. The backdrop I did today was done with an iPhone 5s that is now retired. I recommend that photos be taken during the season that you are modeling on your layout. That's a given. I recommend at least two hours after sunup to no later than two hours before sun down. Brightest light of the day will always work best.
3. Determining distance is very technical. Stand are road side where the scene looks like what you want on the layout then take the pictures! Really. I shoot five photos from a location, two to the left, one straight on, and two to the right. This way I can splice them together in Photoshop.
4. Avoid manmade objects like buildings that are not at least about a 1/4 mile away. If they are closer then you will get nasty distortions that Lee referred to when viewing at an angle. If all such objects are in the distance there will be no distortion problems.
5. You can adjust photo image size easily in Photoshop. I use Photoshop Elements. Much less expensive and it will do everything you need. Full blown Photoshop is very expensive and is big time overkill for our applications.

Here is an image that should interest y'all. It shows that I try and do avoid straight lines in my scenery and backdrop photos, especially where they meet up. Also, you don't need to be particularly concerned that colors match. In fact, I like it better that the backdrop green and foreground greens are not the same -- looks more realistic!





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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Art -- Photo backdrop

Fri, 2018-01-19 18:25 — James Six

Hi Art,

My layout is on a basement room that is climate controlled along with the rest of the house. Don't know how it would work in changing temperature and humidity. But, . . . I do know that this same peel-and-sticl photoprint paper is used to apply to commercial vans with company names etc. So, it should work in your garage.



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## Another scene that I am working on

Fri, 2018-01-19 18:34 — James Six

Here is another scene that I am working on that the photo backdrop is critical in creating the look and appearance I am after. Note that there is a hill in the background, not West Virginia by any means but for us Midwesterners that's a hill! The scene is not complete, but you get the idea. I used a combination of model trees and the trees in the photo backdrop to make the transition from the flat to the hill. I have to think this same technique would work for coal country.

By the way, this photo was taken at about 45-degrees to the backdrop. Distortion is NOT a problem here. Then again, there are no large man-made objects in the photo backdrop. That is critical to making it work.



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## I have seen jim's backdrops

Fri, 2018-01-19 19:16 — Maynard Mitchell

I have seen jim's backdrops first hand, I was instantly convinced and was amazed how it added another level of realism to the layout. I am now in the process of using photo backdrops on my layout. Thanks to these two guys for steering me in the right direction.

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## Maynard Mitchell -- I have seen jim's backdrops

Fri, 2018-01-19 19:34 — James Six

Hi Mitch! Folks, Maynard Mitchell (Mitch) is one of the finest, most talented model railroaders that I know. He and I have been good friends for 7 or 8 years not. Tom Johnson and I visited him over the holidays and did some photography of his layout. Mitch uses photo backdrops too. I got him started and he has taken off like a rocket. Note: Mitch's methods with this are almost the same as mine.

Here is a photo that I took of his layout. I dare you to find where the layout meets the photo backdrop! Click on this photo and you will see the larger image.



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## Still more to do.

Fri, 2018-01-19 19:38 — Maynard Mitchell

I just thought I'd let people know, the pointy group of trees to the far right are not finished yet, the trees continue on up the hill. To me, the scenery is what makes the layout come alive.

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## You guys taking your own

Fri, 2018-01-19 20:51 — Virginian and L...



You guys taking your own photos are doing a nice job with them. For me I think I will have to do something similar to what Lee did, the area I would need to photo is 1500 miles away for cryin out loud.

Rob in Texas

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

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## Vacation Time?



Fri, 2018-01-19 20:53 — JC Shall

Well Rob, isn't it time for a little vacation?



**-Jack**

[Louisiana Central Railroad](#)

[The Louisiana Central Blog](#)

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## No, actually I am recovered



Fri, 2018-01-19 20:57 — Virginian and L...

No, actually I am recovered enough to go back to work on Monday, first day back for several weeks. I spent my time off mostly with pain killers, ice, and surgery.

Rob in Texas

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## More of Maynard Mitchell's layout and backdrops.

Fri, 2018-01-19 21:39 — TomJohnson

Here are a few more photo's of Maynard Mitchell's beautiful layout with his outstanding transitions to photo backdrops.





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## Those sure are beautiful

Sat, 2018-01-20 05:41 — Virginian and L...



Those sure are beautiful scenes thanks for sharing. I can think of a few and that is very few folks that have really excellent backdrops. You guys are on the list. One fellow paints his and they look so real that I asked him if people get embarrassed when they try and reach into them to pick up something. He said it has happened.

In the level below what I will call the backdrop masters level that we have just seen displayed I would suggest something that is with in the grasp of those of us that are not as talented, guys like me that have a bit of color blindness. I will call this the unobtrusive level. If one can not hit the level of greatness we just saw it would be very well worth it to be unnoticed. The back drop is not a model and if one can put forth something that is just not noticed or does not call attention to itself you have a win.

Think sky blue here. Clouds maybe. Things like that will tend to be ignored and forgotten so although they do not add anything to a scene they sure don't take anything away. And if you have more skills like what was seen on here by all means do that.

Like many tasks there are many ways to accomplish the project. I truly marvel at the folks that have the eye for color and texture that we have seen. They are that good.

Rob in Texas

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — jamessix

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### A big Thank You.

Sat, 2018-01-20 07:54 — Maynard Mitchell

I'd like to thank Jim for posting the photos of my layout, I do not have the ability to post my own photos yet. And a big thanks to Rob in Texas for his kind comments.

I have only finished a farm backdrop and several lake backdrops, the lake backdrops were quite easy and I would recommend a beginner to start with a lake, they are simple, seem to fit almost anywhere, and the main thing is to make them level. I do try and match some of the model railroad scenery colors by touching up the photos with the correct colors. That is my secret for making the backdrop photo blend in with the surrounding scenery, its not really a secret, it's just something that made them look 'at home'.

Thanks Guys, Mitch.

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## Holy Samollies!!!

Sat, 2018-01-20 08:25 — Jackh

Thanks for the show and tell on how to do this kind of back drop.

I may just have to move locales so I can go out and get some photos without having to travel as Rob put it 1500 + or - miles to get them.

Jim I want to echo an earlier question if you know the answer. What brand of paint did you use and what was the color name? Last time I tried a light blue it came up gray in photos.

Thanks, Jack

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## Rob -- where to get photos

 jamessix's picture

Sat, 2018-01-20 08:36 — jamessix

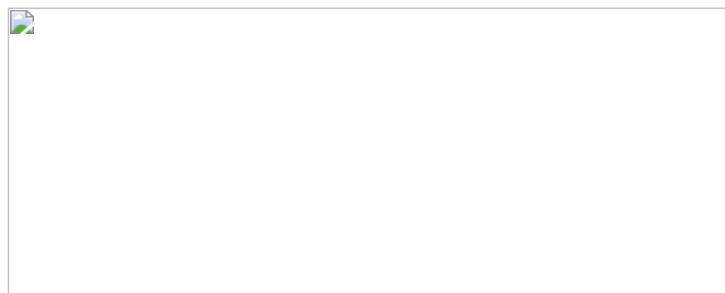
Rob,

I did not know you were out for surgery. I am glad that you have mended and are ready to return to work.

Now, about photos for backdrop for your Wheeling layout, how about this one? I got it off the internet where there are many! This photo is plenty large enough for photo backdrop use.



James Six, modeling 1925-1935



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 jamessix's picture

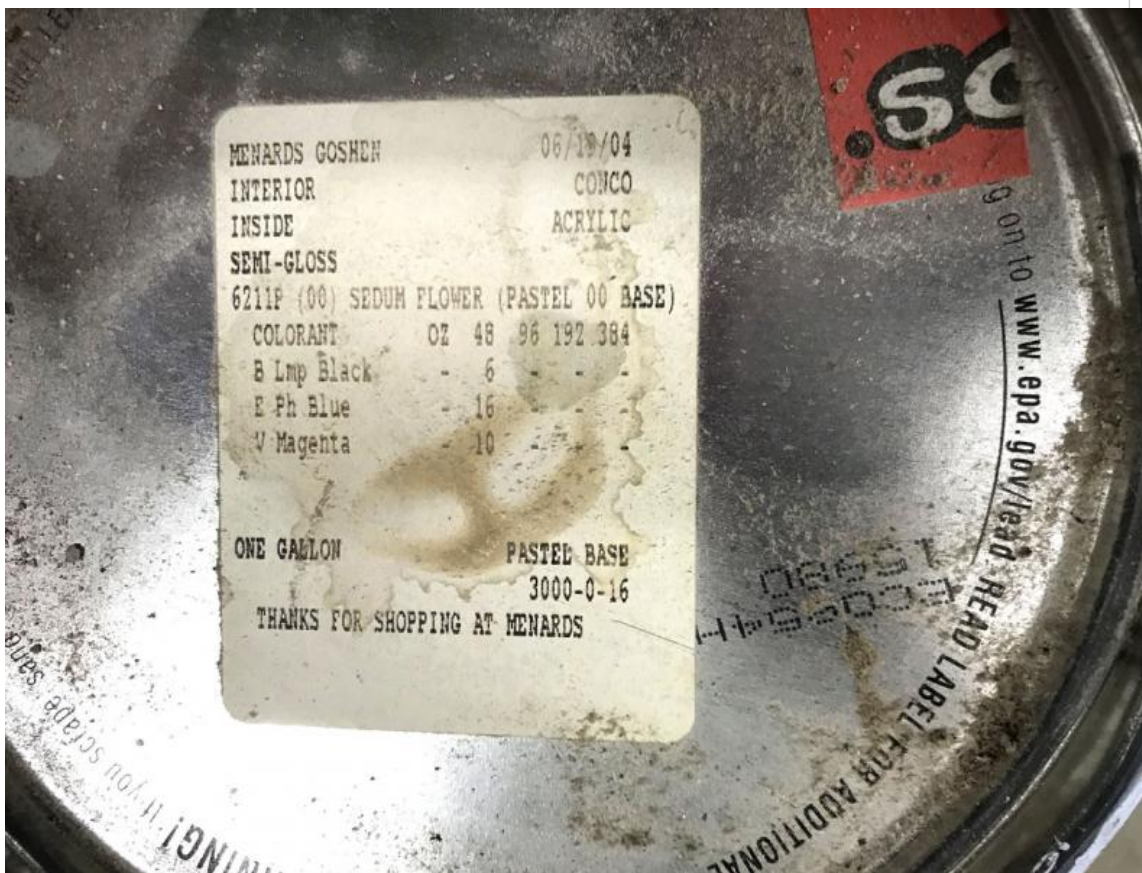
## Jack -- Holy Samollies!!!

Sat, 2018-01-20 09:16 — jamessix

Here are the paints that I used for my backdrop. I dug the old cans out of storage. I apologize for them being so old and dirty. One color is slightly lighter than the other. The lighter one goes on the lower half of the backdrop and the darker on the top half. They are blended together in the middle while still wet. Both were purchased from Menards.



This color in the middle photo is the lighter of the two colors.




Below is the darker of the two colors.



James Six, modeling 1925-1935



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## Jack -- Holy Samollies!!!

Sat, 2018-01-20 09:18 — jamessix

Here

James Six, modeling 1925-1935



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 jamessix's picture

## Here is the factory that I

Sat, 2018-01-20 11:18 — jamessix

Here is the factory that I showed earlier on. I have been working on it more based on the Sanborn maps that we were discussing. I noted that on the Sanborn maps that there were coal sheds attached to the factory buildings. So, I decided to add an Atlas lumber shed (that I will modify to look like a coal shed) to the side of the factory boiler house. The photo here gives a good idea of where I am headed with this. I will update you as progress is made.

What makes this so desirable to me is that in addition to the normal boxcars that will serve the factory train crews will need to spot loaded coal hoppers and pick up empties at the end of the factory siding. Loving it!

Looks like I will need to add a section of photo backdrop to the wall behind where the buildings are separated.



James Six, modeling 1925-1935



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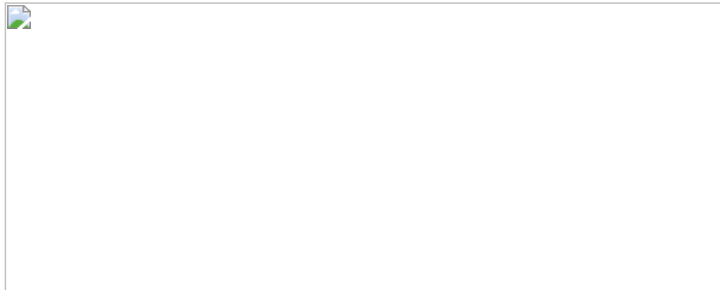
## Here is the factory that I

Sat, 2018-01-20 12:50 — jamessix

Here is another view of the boiler house for my furniture factory. Hmmm . . . after looking over these two photos I just came to the conclusion that such coal sheds were serviced with coal gondolas and not hopper cars. My next photos will have a gon in the photos. I am confident that the gons were unloaded into the shed manually by a couple or workers.



James Six, modeling 1925-1935



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## "In the level below what I

Sat, 2018-01-20 12:48 — ctxmf74


*"In the level below what I will call the backdrop masters level that we have just seen displayed I would suggest something that is with in the grasp of those of us that are not as talented, guys like me that have a bit of color blindness. I will call this the unobtrusive level. If one can not hit the level of greatness we just saw it would be very*

*well worth it to be unnoticed. The back drop is not a model and if one can put forth something that is just not noticed or does not call attention to itself you have a win."*

Hi Rob, I think your approach makes sense if in person viewing and operating a layout is the primary goal. Highly detailed photo backdrops can look great in photos of a layout but viewed in person they just look like nice photos behind a layout which can be more distracting than something less detailed behind the layout :>) We tend to forget that layouts we see online or in magazine always look better in photos than they do if we see them in person, so we put unnecessary pressure on ourselves to over think and over detail minor stuff when we should be thinking more in terms of the layout in person experience and it's overall scenic and operational effect. Here things like room spacing, benchwork and track plan composition, scenic continuity, prototypical impression, colors, etc. are the big things while details are the small things .....DaveB



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 jamessix's picture

## Rob and Dave -- "In the level below what I

Sat, 2018-01-20 13:21 — jamessix

Please understand that we are all new friends. As friends we can disagree and remain friends. This is one of those times that I disagree with y'all's analysis. While I think the photos of my layout showing the photo backdrops generally look good, I strongly believe the real layout looks better than the photos. I also don't believe that Tom, Mitch, Mike, some others and myself are the only ones that can do this. It is much simpler and easier than you probably are aware of.

While I really appreciate, as I am sure the others appreciate the nice things y'all say about our efforts at this, I see no greatness in what we have done. I sincerely believe that many others -- like y'all, can do this too. There is very little "art" in this. Folks who paint their backdrops require artistic ability. We who use photo backdrops only need to point a camera (smart phone) at a scene from roadside. I shoot lots of such photos. Some actually get used, most don't, but I have a photo collection to work from.





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## Photos vs. Art



Sat, 2018-01-20 14:27 — JC Shall

For years and years I always heard the mantra that photo backdrops were bad . . . too much detail, they distracted attention away from the models, the perspective issues couldn't be overcome, etc. etc. We were always told that a nice painted backdrop was *always* the best route to follow. Though I've never done a photo backdrop, I've always believed that if done properly they would look great.

Well now in these past few years a bunch of folks have actually confirmed what I've always suspected. We've seen many examples by several folks just in this thread, and they look absolutely great to my eye. And frankly, even if there were some minor perspective issues, I'd take those any day over the average painted backdrop.

I'm not saying you shouldn't do the art thing. If that's what you want, that's fine . . . do it! But I firmly believe that the old arguments against photo backdrops have been turned on their ear. For *me*, well done photo backdrops are clearly what I'd prefer.

Having said all this, it remains to be seen whether I can come even close to duplicating what these guys are showing us here 🤔

**-Jack**

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — jamessix

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Mantra

Sat, 2018-01-20 14:50 — Graham Line

Model railroading is plagued by too many "mantras" and not enough experimentation. I have recently seen excellent backdrops painted by a guy who was an electrical engineer all his life and decided he wanted to learn to paint. A couple of classes to learn technique and materials (the classes save time) and a lot of Bob Ross and he was on his way.

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### Photos VS Art

Sat, 2018-01-20 15:27 — sailormatlac

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Jack, these mantras are funny and often repeated by people that never tried the damn thing, are comfortable with the techniques they mastered eons ago and don't like the idea they could get superseded by something else. Enough rant on my part! Like any things, you can do it bad and you can do it wrong. But from my very limited experience, well handled photos can yield incredible results. It would be foolish to no use the technique if it suits the goals one want to achieve.



Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>

Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>

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## Photo backdrop and perspective issues

 jamessix's picture

Sat, 2018-01-20 15:55 — jamessix

I find this old argument to be a bunch of bull \$#@%. Sorry, I do not mean to be crude, but that is exactly what I think. A painted backdrop is absolutely no better with perspective than a photo. The problem is not the photo or the painting at all. The perceived problem is the transition from 3D layout to 2D flat backdrop. This cannot be overcome and made perfect no matter what type of backdrop that you use. Period!

However, the perspective "problem" can be minimized to the point of not being an issue at all. The key is what is in your backdrop and how "close" it is. Think about driving down the highway and looking out the side. Things up close change perspective quickly, that is they shape change. On the other hand, things off in the distance change little to not at all. Man-made objects like buildings are the worst offenders. Trees and other nature objects don't offend at all.

So, to have a good backdrop, either painted or photo, the key is to NOT have buildings close in the backdrop. They need to be off in the distance or not be there at all. If you do this one thing you will not have perspective issues that are noticeable and you will be a "master".

I sure didn't mean to stir up a hornet's nest or step on anyone's toes. If I did, please accept my apology. Back to working on my furniture factory now.

James Six, modeling 1925-1935



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## Man Made Objects


Sat, 2018-01-20 16:17 — BM50

Jim, I agree with you totally on this. The subject of photo backdrops has been discussed in the past on this site and I still feel the same now as I did then. Blending natural things on the backdrop with foreground scenery can be done with success as you and others have shown. However, I've never seen photos of closeup man-made objects that look like they belong with the foreground models.

Even a very detailed layout like George Sellios's would lose some of it's "look" if it had photos of actual buildings behind his nice modeling.

Duane Goodman

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 jamessix's picture

## furniture factory progress

Sat, 2018-01-20 18:54 — jamessix

I have made more progress on the boiler house and coal shed. The siding has to be extended. You can see the section of Rail Craft code-55 track I am installing to match the siding track already there. I added outside vertical braces to the coal shed. A coal conveyor will be used to move coal up and into the shed. Yes, I will be able to use 2-bay hoppers for this service. I am thinking that the coal shed will be painted a medium-light gray color. That will weather well with coal dust.






Below is the overall furniture factory. There are six places to spot freight cars - five for boxcars and the one at the coal shed for coal hoppers.



James Six, modeling 1925-1935



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 jamessix's picture

## Duane -- Man Made Objects

Sat, 2018-01-20 16:28 — jamessix

I agree completely with you Duane. This is why I do not include man-made foreground objects in my photo backdrops. It would be a sure recipe for failure.

Thanks,

James Six, modeling 1925-1935



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## Backdrops

Sat, 2018-01-20 16:43 — redP

"For years and years I always heard the mantra that photo backdrops were bad . . . too much detail, they distracted attention away from the models, the perspective issues couldn't be overcome, etc. etc. We were always told that a nice painted backdrop was *always* the best route to follow. "




Poppycock!

PC/Amtrak in east central Indiana 1972

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## Is it worth it?

 jamesix's picture

Sat, 2018-01-20 19:10 — jamesix

Folks, should I continue posting progress photos of my one-town layout, or should I back off some?

Just curious,

James Six, modeling 1925-1935



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## Keep going. It has made me re

Sat, 2018-01-20 20:02 — hobbes1310

Keep going. It has made me re design my layout lol

Phil



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## I have seen some excellent



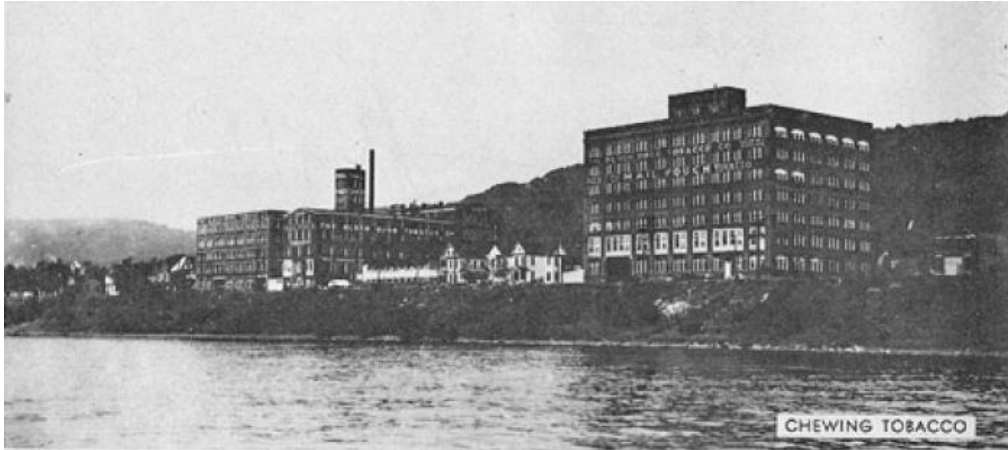
Sat, 2018-01-20 20:17 — Virginian and L...

I have seen some excellent painted backdrops in lots of photos and from lots of angles and the excellent ones look great. As was mentioned the folks that do that need artistic ability and for many of us it is something you either have or don't to some degree. I do not have that ability and I know it.

The photo back drops that I have seen here are great looking. They model a specific local and the scenery cooperates with them. Perspectives are close enough to blend in together. I know of one where the builder had his backdrops printed with out some details to make it fit his time period and like Jim I believe he did it with the sky he painted instead of the one that came with the backdrop. His scenery in the fore ground also worked with the backdrop.

For me the stumbling block is the painting the road to match the photo or any matching of paint and colors between fore ground 3D and 2D scenery. I can do a lot of things but paint matching depends on how much trouble I am having with color vision on that day and most times it is not good.

Another issue for me is the perspective of the backdrop vs the layout. Generally on the commercial back drops I have seen the viewing point is much higher that the perspective I am looking for. I know that sounds picky but it does make a difference to me in the way things will be viewed.



Here is a view from the Ohio River. Imagine your self on the far river bank looking toward the structures of the city. The river will be the aisle for walking. Along the river there are railroad tracks then water street (go figure) then the industries then behind them other shops homes or more industries.

Now if you are on the bank looking toward the land you will see things like this.



I took this photo in 2014 from what used to be the railroad right away. As can be seen the building is large and the point of view means one is looking up to see the sky. This would be a common view with the larger industries. Most photos are taken from a somewhat elevated position and the backdrops I have seen do not look right to me for this area and view point.

Now I am thinking of a couple things regarding backdrops.

Blue paint and then some low relief hillside that goes nearly to the top of each level and a small sliver of sky.

So from the aisle in will be tracks a street in some places in others the industry will be the only thing next to the tracks then some low relief structures in some places in others the industry will occupy all the space between the tracks and the hill side.

One other thing I was thinking of with photos was mounting some pictures of buildings from the area on some gator board and putting these in some places.

Now one thing that helps with this idea is the fact that nearly all industries I am going to model are large in width, length and height and will tower over trains and vehicles and folks standing in the aisle or seated in the aisle. I am planning on two levels with the lower one to be operated from a seated position and the upper level at about shoulder level.

The photos above are where mail pouch was made when I worked there.

Now the big issue with painting streets to the back drop and then in the backdrop is they remain in view till they end. They also have a continual rise till they hit the hillside, in many places it is slight in others it is steep. To be able to pull off that paint job would take skills I do not have. And then one would need to paint in the next 4 or 5 blocks.

So the view angle, subject matter and space limitations are all tossing some issues into the backdrop game.

Rob in Texas

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — jamessix

- [Layout design](#)

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Absolutely keep going...

Sat, 2018-01-20 20:22 — Pelsea

Some people seem to think there is one best way to do backdrops, but situations vary too much for that.

My backdrop is... black. Guess it's from all those years playing in the pit for operas. I can't do photos— you'd have to be on your knees for it to work.

pqe

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## Jim keep posting your stuff

Sat, 2018-01-20 20:25 — Virginian and L...



Jim keep posting your stuff it is an excellent example as are many others that have been posted on here as well. I think those things all add a lot to the blog making it more like a discussion rather than a monologue. In many cases some techniques really shine in depicting specific areas and they might not be as effective in others. All of the different ideas have their place and strong points so as they say lets not toss out the baby with the bath water but keep looking for new ides we can share with each other.

Rob in Texas

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## City modeling

Sat, 2018-01-20 20:40 — Don Hanley

Rob



I have the same issue modeling a city scene. I needed to create a credible backdrop with out much painting. Instead of explaining it in this thread, check out my article published in June 2017 3-D Backdrop <http://mrhpub.com/2017-06-jun/online/html5/> This might give you some ideas

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## Keep Em Coming

Sat, 2018-01-20 20:41 — Maynard Mitchell

I'd say keep em coming Jim, there seems to be quite a thread, and it may give someone the motivation to do some modeling they might not have done otherwise. Sometimes its interesting to see the thinking process behind a model as its being built, as in your coal shed, we have watched it change as your working on it.

Another thought on the photo vs painting backdrop, I tried painting my lakes, not just a five minute try, but a long three year try. I even bought oil painting videos and the necessary paints, the lakes still looked hideous, I was ashamed to have anyone see them, this is what triggered my photo backdrops. After seeing Jim's backdrops and seeing them first hand, I knew this was the "only" way I would have a decent backdrop that didn't distract from the layout. I needed to get them on the wall and cover up my blunders, under my lakes are the ugliest lakes in the world.

As I started laying the photos onto the backdrop it excited me, it actually gave me an enthusiasm to do more. I have an artistic ability, but am not an artist. I felt the photos added so much to my layout that it changed the way I felt about my layout. No one needs to be an artist, far from it, the photos were the best thing that happened to my layout and anyone can do it, just cut the photos and lay them against the wall, that's the best way to see what a change it might make, and you can just throw them away if your not satisfied, but I think you will be.

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## "My backdrop is... black.

Sat, 2018-01-20 23:14 — ctxmf74

*"My backdrop is... black. Guess it's from all those years playing in the pit for operas. "*

Makes perfect sense. A layout is a play in many respects and not having details on the backdrop would help the viewer focus on the actors. Now of course if static photos matter it might be better to have a backdrop with identifiable features because the viewer then has a different deciphering task .....DaveB



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## James...

Sat, 2018-01-20 23:45 — AlanR

Please keep posting! Your layout and the discussion here are both inspiring and causing some good rethinking about where i want to go with my own layout.

**Alan Rice**

*Amherst Belt Lines / Amherst Railway Society, Inc.*

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## Thanks for guiding me to your

Sun, 2018-01-21 03:44 — Virginian and L...

Thanks for guiding me to your article Don. I will be rereading it shortly, likely at the club house this morning.

Rob in Texas

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## Keep Posting Progress Photos

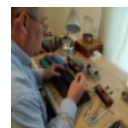
Sun, 2018-01-21 06:38 — Tom Conboy

I hope you keep posting, Jim. I find the progress photos informative and inspiring. 🍷🍷

Tom

Owensville Terminal Railroad (HO Scale - TOMA)

<https://owensvilleterminal.blogspot.com/>





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## I agree with Tom

Sun, 2018-01-21 07:21 — JerryC

Keep those photos coming Jim.

Jerry

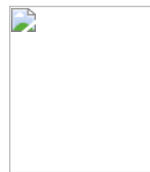
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## Tom and all - Keep Posting Progress Photos

Sun, 2018-01-21 09:29 — jamessix

Thanks for your encouragement. I was becoming concerned that not enough of you were replying to my posts and those of a few others who have been sharing photos. Without comments and questions one never knows if they are doing any good or not.

Tom, I love that scene of your yard office and switcher. I always love to see a train running through weeds! Very nice work.



James Six, modeling 1925-1935

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concept and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Keep it going Jim

Sun, 2018-01-21 14:10 — redP

Keep it going Jim

PC/Amtrak in east central Indiana 1972

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### The secret is in the reads....

Sun, 2018-01-21 14:14 — Pelsea

Instead of counting comments (welcome as they are) look at the read count. This thread has been clicked 29,419 times so far.

pqe



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## pqe - The secret is in the reads....

Sun, 2018-01-21 15:06 — James Six

Good point PQE. I should have thought of that. Duh! 29,419 is a lot of reads. 👍



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## It also seems to be growing

Sun, 2018-01-21 17:02 — Virginian and L...

It also seems to be growing at better than a page a day and a great deal of it is contributions of readers.

Rob in Texas

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## Furniture factory update on my one-town layout

Sun, 2018-01-21 17:30 — James Six

Below are a series of pics showing the steps I took today as progress is made to my furniture. These pics show the coal shed to the boiler house and how coal gets from the railroad into the shed. A shallow under track pit lined with railroad ties is where coal is dumped, then conveyered up to and into the shed. The coal used for this scene is real coal that I crushed.









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## Track Plan Lyons, IN

Mon, 2018-01-22 07:52 — JackM

I have made some posts about trying to come up with a one town plan for my L shaped space. My goals were

- 1) Secondary branch line.
- 2) Single operator sessions of not more than an hour.
- 3) Concentrate on what I like; buildings, scenery, building freight cars.
- 4) Limit what I don't like; bench work, electronics.
- 5) Operationally bullet proof.
- 6) Prefer Pennsy steam era.
- 7) Use as much of current 35 car rolling stock as possible. I have two H10 Consolidations and three cabooses.
- 8) Five year completion working on week ends only.

I found a branch that seems to work, Vincennes secondary from Indianapolis. Originally I concentrated on the town of Worthington. My space is an L, 26 by 12. I just could not get that to work if I had a fiddle yard on each end. Moving on down the line I found the town of Lyons. The Pennsy CT 1000 lists a storage track, elevator and coal dealer. So attached is my attempt. Operationally the local would be moving right to left or to the south. It would make set outs and pick ups from the long spur and the storage/team track. Most grain from the elevator would be moving north, so the south bound would leave these cars on the storage track.

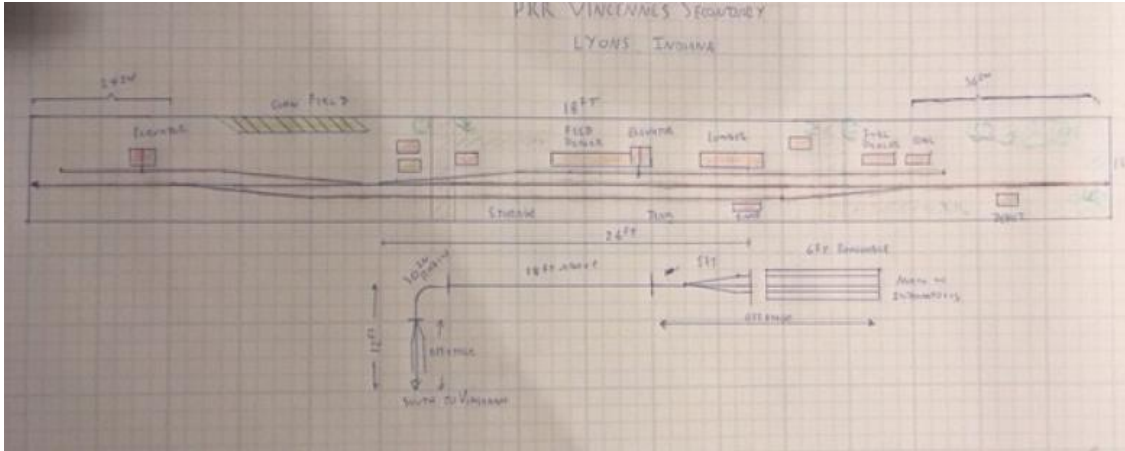
After the south bound departs, the north bound would appear. It would work the second elevator to the left and pick up cars left in storage. I also have a third track in the fiddle yard for a north bound coal train behind an L1 Mike that would just pass through. I can use all of my freight cars except for about six PS1's if I move the date to about 1950.

A couple of things I don't like. Giving up so much space for a fiddle yard and having to build a removable six foot extension to the right to circumvent an unmovable door to a laundry room. Also, just building and having to fiddle with the removable fiddle yard. I have also thought of having a canning plant to the left instead of the second elevator.

I would build it on door panels, which are already up. Code 83 and Peco spring loaded turnouts for minimum maintenance and control. Surely I can make four turn outs in the operational prortion bullet proof. I use a Digitrax Zepher which has given me no problems.

An alternative would be to use the whole space for one town without any fiddle yards like Don Hanley does on his Erie layout. It solves a lot of problems, but just not sure if I would like that.

Does this look reasonable to my more experienced comrades? Sorry for the "low tech" track planning.



Jack

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## Jack - Track Plan Lyons, IN

Mon, 2018-01-22 07:56 — James Six

Jack,

You may want to consider not having a fiddle yard at each end, Instead, enlarge the yard in Lyons and make it your fiddle yard. This would provide you with more "real estate" to add industries at each end that can be switched. I have seen others do the quite successfully.



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## I will second the motion for

Mon, 2018-01-22 09:44 — Virginian and L...



I will second the motion for one fiddle yard. To handle your run through train just have one track go through and have it be a fold up section when not in use. Or eliminate the through train and add a place for the coal cars in the extra space you have. You could then add another pair of tracks in your fiddle yard and likely be very happy. You have a very nice track plan as Jim suggested adding a couple of yard tracks would help out a lot. Since you have taken over management of this part of the line there is no reason it should not be more prosperous. 😊 😊

Rob in Texas

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## "A couple of things I don't

Mon, 2018-01-22 11:16 — ctxmf74

*"A couple of things I don't like. Giving up so much space for a fiddle yard and having to build a removable six foot extension to the right to circumvent an unmovable door to a laundry room."*

Can you wrap the tracks around the room and just put in a short lift out or lift up section for the door. Making the complete loop would allow a double ended staging yard on the opposite wall so trains could run thru town from either direction. It also would give a continuous run for testing equipment and days when you just want to sit and watch trains go by. The staging loop could be on very narrow shelves so wouldn't take up much extra room space. My Pennsy TT scale layout is in a 15 foot by 9.5 foot room with 21 inch benchwork on the town side and 6 inch wide staging shelf on the opposite side of the room. I have a lift out section at the room door that only needs to be in place for operations involving the complete loop, I can run point to point without it being in place. This type of layout plan gives lots of operational flexibility.....DaveB



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## Graph paper

Mon, 2018-01-22 11:40 — Graham Line

So happy to see someone sketching their plans on graph paper. Tried SCARM but I'm not nearly good enough with it to ignore the program and keep ideas flowing.

My western Ohio 50s memories (DT&I, Erie and NYC) include quite a bit of space between structures, treed creek lines, and lots of ragweed and other things that made my eyes water.

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — jamessix

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Gators

Tue, 2018-01-23 07:43 — jamessix

Bill,

I graduated from UF. I have Gators in my blood!! Steve Spurrier was quarterback whenI was there! Now you know for sure that I am old!

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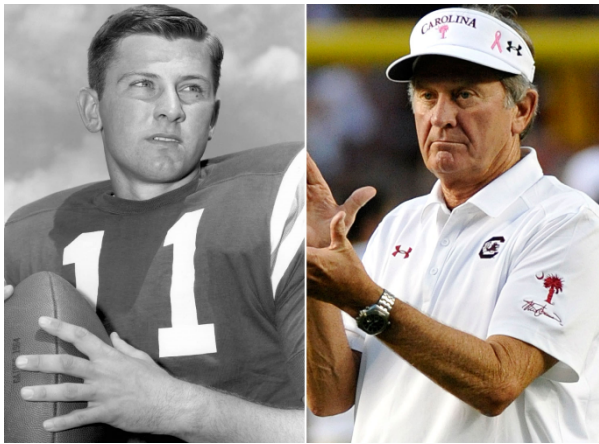
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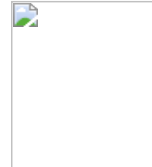
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James Six, modeling 1925-1935



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## BSME 1978

Tue, 2018-01-23 07:50 — fecbill

My Dad graduated UF in 1939, I graduated in 1978.

Bill Michael

Modeling GST, generic southern town, circa 1950-62

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## Gators

Tue, 2018-01-23 08:29 — redP

I see plenty of that now that I relocated to Florida, Im still an IU fan though. 😊

PC/Amtrak in east central Indiana 1972

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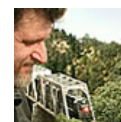
## Rob, your panoramic picture

Tue, 2018-01-23 11:27 — joef

Rob, using drag-and-drop to post a 4MB photo just about broke this website, and it certainly broke the editor. I had to delete your post because it breaks the editor.

Please UPLOAD large photos like this, DO NOT drag and drop them.

I downloaded your 4MB monster and then uploaded it as a file so it will work correctly in the next post.



## Joe Fugate

Publisher, Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine



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## How about a panoramic picture



Tue, 2018-01-23 11:28 — Virginian and L...

How about a panoramic picture that would show nearly the entire area I plan to model.



Sorry for the large size ~~but it would not let me resize the photo on here~~ *moderator note: (we have corrected this).*

I believe it can be enlarged quite a bit for added detail. Now this is almost an overview of the layout I am looking to build, the one town concept. I am planning two levels this would be the top level. The bottom level would be the Benwood yards. Now some of these things will be named after folks that have been super helpful or inspirational in my being able to condense things down and decide to model a small section of the world.

Rob in Texas

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## Thanks Joe I did not have a



Tue, 2018-01-23 19:18 — Virginian and L...

Thanks Joe I did not have a way to do this that I was aware of. It was saved in a file on my computer and the plan was to change the size in image properties after it was here to the usual size. I did not realize I was messing things up. So I will not do it again unless I forget and I did think it was smaller in size when I did it.

Please accept my apology for messing things up I had no intention of doing that.

Rob in Texas

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Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### "You gotta know the territory"

Sat, 2018-01-27 10:37 — [dssa1051@yahoo.com](#)

Jim, I agree that finding something other than your hometown is a good idea. The only problem today is that many large industries are gone without a trace and if you don't do your homework you could miss some interesting locations. Some areas of the country were photographed much more than others. As an example, Art's great color photo of Fallston is the first color photo of a Ma & Pa structure I've ever seen. (Looks like the Ma & Pa paint scheme matched the PRR.) I'm sure if I drove there today I would find nothing in that photo plus getting stuck in traffic on US30 in York like I was last June! At the same time I think it would be difficult to write a primer for finding "River City" for someone just starting out. Matt has been able to find an unbelievable amount of information on the Internet for the Erie without having to visit any of the areas he models. I guess the take home message is you can travel and find a scenic or interesting location and then do your homework or vice versa if you find an old photo or map.

Robert

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## Hometown One Town.

Sat, 2018-01-27 12:32 — Moe line

Jim, in reply to your post about not modeling one's hometown, it sort of depends on the railroad facilities, when I go to build my hometown as a model, it will be fairly accurate, even with the selective compression, because it is a small town of 8,000 population, and the railroad operations are equally small.

My hometown Soo Line yard while being a division point has only nine tracks, and small engine service area, and rip tracks. The rest of the town had sidings off the main to serve the industries, mostly related to agriculture, with the entire main part of town from the passenger depot to the yard being barely a mile long.

The Great Northern branch line in my hometown had even less facilities with only five customers, a WYE, two short sidings and three business tracks. This, besides nostalgia of course, is why I am choosing to model it, and have been even more inspired by your one town postings. Jim

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## Jim - Hometown One Town.

Sat, 2018-01-27 14:13 — James Six

You sound like me of not too many years ago. Since you have not started building the layout yet, I wish you the best of luck. You also sound like you have a good, workable plan for building your layout. Just be careful with how close to the prototype that you try to make your layout and you should be just fine. Do keep us updated with any progress, obstacles, difficulties, . . . and most importantly, your successes.



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## Hometown & Homework

Sat, 2018-01-27 21:38 — sailormatlac

You're right Robert. One can gather an incredible amount of data in a relatively short time just by surfing the internet. However, and it was true in the pre-internet time, you must know how & where to search.

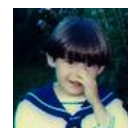
On the other hand, I find it harder to work with my hometown. This is what I do with my larger CN-based layout (late 80s-early 90s). I think I lack a critical distance from the subject to be able to be more efficient. I wasted countless hours and resources working on irrelevant things rather than getting the larger picture right. It can be done, but much more restraint is required to keep focussed and not cramming together all your whimsical childhood memories in a patchwork fashion. For this reason, I think it's no longer a handicap to work far away from your own turf, as long as you have a good sense of observation to a certain point.

When I researched Erie's Dayton Branch, I felt I had the freedom to have a glance at the branch and understand how it worked and what could be trimmed out to fit the space. I wasn't emotional tied to "X grain elevator" or the cute bridge over "Y river" or whatever. I had fondness for the prototype, but didn't wear pink nostalgia glasses. That's a big plus when one has to make excruciating choices.

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>



Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>  
Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>

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## Sturgis

Sat, 2018-01-27 21:50 — sailormatlac



Jim, it's always fun reading your thoughts here. I think we faced the same frustrations with trying to follow accurately prototypes and the frustration that comes with it. In my previous message, I mentioned I tried to incorporate my own hometown a few time in the club layout. It always failed and we dump that ideas once for all. We still model that branchline, but focussed our efforts on two fascinating industries that fitted our space instead of warping decades of fond memories.

"I am able to research Sturgis enough that I can model the "feel" of Sturgis and a Midwestern town without becoming dissatisfied because I am not able to match the town with any exactness. Being able to model without such concerns is a huge bonus!"

You said it so well! In some way, Sturgis is like a mentor for your layout. You can rely on it when you don't understand a certain point, it influences your work, shape it and make it relevant. It also provide a realistic frame of operation, making sure your layout isn't whimsical. It's probably for the same reason I like to model Erie while I have absolutely no personal connection with the road. It is a fair representation of what I like about the late steam era, I like the their corporate identity and the kind of locomotives they used. From there, I'm free to develop a concept that can sustain my interest and ambition in the hobby.

Matt

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## An other thought

Sun, 2018-01-28 08:51 — sailormatlac



A good night of sleep always puts ideas in shape. Two other issues can happen by modeling your hometown or anything you have a very strong link with.

First, fitting your hometown into your available space can be tricky. It is much more easier to look for a suitable prototype by taking in account the actual scope of your project than trying to fit a railroad into a given place. As many proficient layout designers will tell you, better start with the benchwork footprint then see what can reasonably fit the space.

Another problem is your hometown can be full of great railroad memories, but maybe the kind of railroad activities that were/are performed there don't fit what parts of the hobby you prefer. It can be too busy or not enough, too diminutive or too big. Maybe your available time only allows for a few short operations or you can't afford too much rolling stock. Maybe you prefer building models of a different era or type. Maybe you hit a wall because too many things must be custom-built. Whatever the reason, it's not because you like it that it fits your life, resources, space, commitment, etc... I think it is important to understand the difference between what we love and what makes us happy. This is a fundamental issue in life and we too often overlay both concepts as a single one.

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>

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## Once again Matt, I agree with

Sun, 2018-01-28 09:09 — James Six

Once again Matt, I agree with all that you wrote. 😊

My problem now that I have settled on Sturgis and have a power plant just outside of town that received trains of coal, I need one of these beasts. This is a USRA 2-10-2 that the Pennsy put their marks on. These brutes were assigned to the GR&I and they pulled coal trains to power plants. Now I have to find a P2K USRA 2-10-2 and modify it to look like this N2. The Belpaire firebox will be a problem.



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Sun, 2018-01-28 09:24 — Moe line

Hi, Matt, no worries here, on the modeling of my hometown with its diminutive size and scaled down facilities, and no rose colored memories, since I worked there as an engineer, with all the frustrations involved with railroading in the winter. I also am modeling the 1950's, which is ten years before I was born, so not really modeling memories.



I certainly appreciate the advice from everyone on this, and one of the reasons I chose my hometown is because it is so small, and even though it was and is part of a mid size class one railroad, it is the secondary main track side of that railroad, so the operations were in the time modeled, more like a short line railroad. Per my timetables of the time it had four daily regular trains, and one branch line train, but when modeled in the fall, there are also grain extras trains added to the operating scheme to fill out operations.

That way I can have as many or as few trains as needed to fill out operations, with the yard switcher working both the yard, and servicing all the industry tracks, for plenty of switching action. The layout will also be built in portable, modular sections, designed to grow or shrink as needed to fit any available space. At the present time all I have available for space is my 16 foot by 22 foot game room, with one wall being only 12 foot due to an angled doorway. In the future, lacking a basement, I will build an outbuilding for the entire layout, which can be as large as I desire, due to having two acres of land at my house, in an unrestricted neighborhood without any zoning laws. Jim

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## What to leave in what to leave out

Sun, 2018-01-28 10:14 — Virginian and L...



What to leave in what to leave out?

We now have lots of great historical information at our finger tips for many places that can be far away and not easily accessible. In many cases unless you have access to a way back machine the bygone era you choose is not available to visit even if it was next door.

We all have a finite amount of resources, in time, money, and space with which to pursue our model railroad dreams. Many of us do not want to create an exact replica of a few miles of track or even a few thousand yards of track. So instead we decide to capture the flavor of a place and build something that represents it more than something that is the place in miniature.

We then get to the point of what to model and how to fit it into our space. The real thing was not constrained by reach in distances of bench work depth or concerned about lots of duck unders reverse loops, wyes, many branches in different directions etc.

I would advocate following the route of the line that appeals to you and making a list of things you wish to include. I would also suggest that the items be listed in an order that would proceed from one compass direction to another. If there are multiple junctions going off in many directions it might be time to combine some of them for modeling purposes.

Just for illustration purposes I will list some things that happen in the town I wish to model. East and North a B&O line going to Pittsburgh PA. from Wheeling WV. West a connection with the Wheeling Terminal Railway to the Wheeling and Lake Erie. In between this connection was what would be a giant reverse loop with a wye in the model if it was duplicated. North a connection with the Panhandle line of the Pennsylvania Railroad. South a connection with the B&O which used to be the Ohio River Railroad. West a connection with the B&O that crossed the Ohio River and incorporated a multi track reverse loop that was part of the yard and engine terminal. Who said there is no prototype for reverse loops around yards and engine terminals? Just out side of town there were several more connections with the B&O and the Pennsy as well as the P&WV the AC&Y and several lines of the W&LE.

Now to include all of these things I would need a space much like a Gymnasium and it would be filled with hard to reach areas and multiple duck unders. That does not even include the various lines inside the small city going to the different industries as they formed reverse loops and some complicated junctions.

Lots of things must be left out if sanity is to be maintained. I will continue these thoughts later on as I describe what things I have done to refine this to a level I could hope to model. Now keep in mind the area I am describing is less than ten miles in length!

Rob in Texas

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

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## TRF in the 1950's.



Sun, 2018-01-28 10:29 — Grenzer47

howdy Matt,

if you're doing TRF in the 1950's you get the bonus of passenger and mixed trains as well. You have the Winnepeger, the mainline through train; the Duluth passenger local via Bemidji; the mixed train to North Dakota and the mainline mixed to Glenwood. There's a number of interesting details about these trains. For example a CP 4-6-2 handled the Winnepeger north of Thief River Falls for a time; the Duluth train was a one car local with a unique RPO-express-baggage-coach hauled by an AS416 like Bowser makes. Walthers produced a kit for that car that still turns up. I've seen photos of the Glenwood mixed being hauled by an FA unit of all things, which must have been interesting while switching line side industries. All fun stuff.

Barry P.

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Rob - You're on to something

Sun, 2018-01-28 10:48 — James Six

Rob,

I read your last message twice in order to absorb it all. You make a real good point. That is, we cannot expect to include all that was along the rail line we are modeling. Ain't gonna happen - at least not for us who pretty much model on our own.

Selecting what to include and not to include is not cut-and-dry and simple to do. I started with the rail traffic that I want to include on my railroad. That is, I want boxcars, coal hoppers, gondolas, reefers, and flat cars in that order of importance. So, as I researched what was in Sturgis in the time I am modeling I found furniture factories that received boxcars for receiving lumber and for shipping furniture. I also found that they received coal shipments to feed their boilers for steam! I did not expect that, hence the changes I am making to my furniture factory. In my research I found that there were three good sized furniture factories in Sturgis back in the 1920s. I do not have the real estate to include three furniture factories so I settled on just one.

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While Sturgis did not have a coal-fired power plant I want coal shipments. Hence I added a power plant that was not there. So much for prototype adherence! Sigh . . .

Coal was shipped in both hopper cars and gons. There were at least six coal dealers that I have found in Sturgis back in the 1920s, I will include three, maybe four coal dealers on the layout. Two of these dealers will receive tank cars and will sell bulk oil as well as coal.

Reefers are a problem. After a lot of grief I found a photo showing reefers alongside what looks like a factory. I do not know what the shipped or received so I may have to pull that out of my backside, but at least I will have my reefers! Should I ever find out what that facility shipped/received, they I will adjust.

I will also include team tracks on the layout. They can ship/receive almost anything. Team tracks are in a sense the most important of "industries" on a layout! Tony Koester has promoted this for many years. I agree with him.

So, what you bring up Rob, should be important to all of us layout builders.



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## Team tracks & interchanges

Sun, 2018-01-28 11:08 — umauma railway

Jim - Rob has challenges modeling his hometown but the multiple railroads intersecting allow for the other modeler's major industry - interchange. While a small Midwest town may have a team track, few had interchanges. Even a port scene provides similar opportunities to use cars and loads of a huge variety. Granted Rob should start looking for a basketball court with a house over it for the mere 10 miles of heavy industry and city scenes. Hats off to that ambition. Lance wrote about starting a Boston themed railroad and why he quit. Worth a read.

My progress on a much smaller, rural, theme layout has taken eight years and I have scratched the surface of what I hope to accomplish. At this glacial pace one small town seems way more achievable in my lifetime.

Some of Tom Johnson's ideas about modeling a narrow right of way really make sense. A 6" deep scene can look very convincing and takes far less time to get to a point of near completion - at least to a point where details can be added later. Maybe this is a 12" shelf in On30 but less doesn't necessarily mean shorter mainline.

Neil Erickson, Umauma, HI

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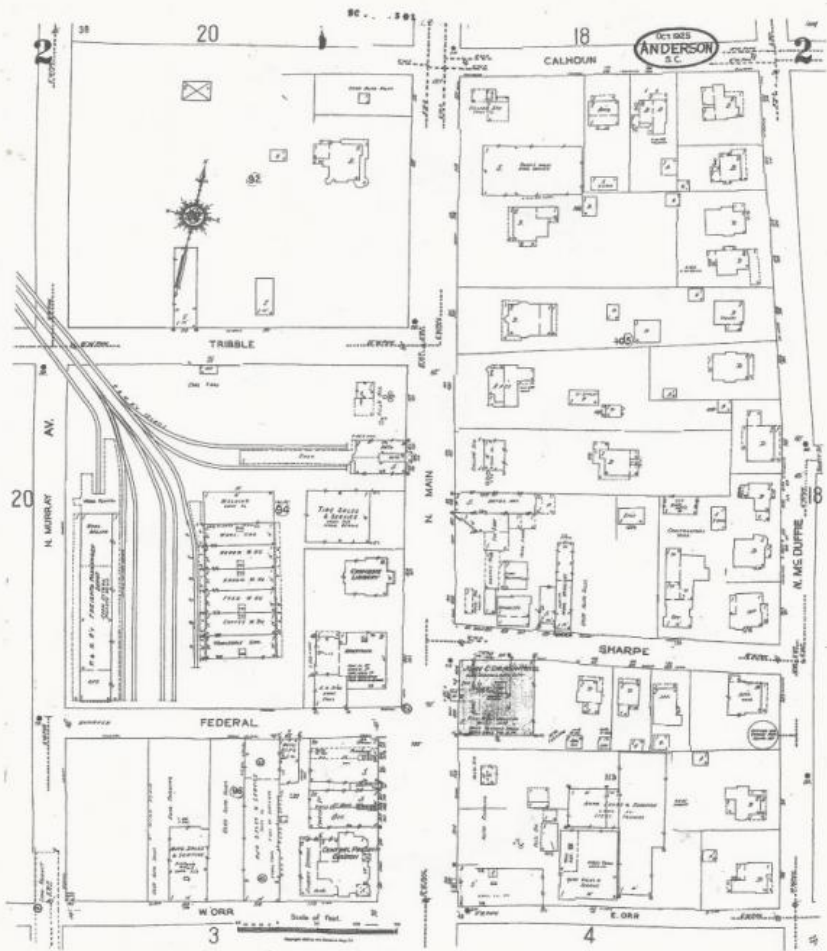
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## Interesting area in Anderson SC

Sun, 2018-01-28 11:10 — fecbill

I lived in Anderson SC from 1978 to 84. Very interesting railroad town for a smaller city but there were many cotton/textile mills until the textile industry moved out of the Carolinas for the most part. Three railroads served Anderson (Blue Ridge, Charleston & Western Carolina, Piedmont & Northern) and all interchanged on the west side of town with some very interesting trackage.

Considering team tracks, the P&N had a small yard area that consisted of two team tracks, a track to freight depot and a track to a multi-customer warehouse. Below are a Sanborn Map of the area and some photos I took in 1979 or 80.







Bill Michael

Modeling GST, generic southern town, circa 1950-62

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## Previous Post two upper tracks

Sun, 2018-01-28 11:16 — fecbill

The two upper tracks in the Sanborn Map went to the P&N Passenger station. P&N was electric until 1950. Passenger trains used interurban cars, freights were either boxcab electric or steeple cab electric.

Bill Michael

Modeling GST, generic southern town, circa 1950-62

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## Although I model in large

Sun, 2018-01-28 11:46 — greghile

Although I model in large scale outdoors, I have been reading this thread with interest for I, too, essentially have a one-town layout. However, given my available real estate there was no way I could precisely replicate my town, so I have not tried very hard to do so while at the same time trying to highlight elements of the town. Therefore, I am "loosely" modeling Martinez, California around the turn of the twentieth century.

I have done considerable research into Martinez and both the city and county historical societies are aware of and excited by my project. There are also ways, however, that I can be more precise, and that is in modeling structures. My layout will include the train depot, the courthouse (which, if you watch the Netflix series *13 Reasons Why* is the courthouse in the



show), some commercial buildings that existed around that time, some Craftsman houses, and the home of naturalist John Muir. I am currently building a livery and stable that I am trying to figure out how to burn down in order to commemorate a major fire in 1904 that leveled a good section of the downtown.

Being that fascinating era of transition in so many ways, from horses to automobiles, from wooden sidewalks to concrete, from outhouses to indoor plumbing, etc., I am able to take some liberties here and there, but what I hope I am creating is the backdrop for stories about the town. And that's where the passion lies for me.

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## Neil - Team tracks & interchanges

Sun, 2018-01-28 11:48 — James Six

Yes sir Neil! I have been under the tutelage of Tony Koester for the past twenty plus years and I am convinced that an interchange can be a most important "industry". That is another reason that I selected Sturgis. Both the NYC and the PRR (my favorites RRs) interchanged there! Like Rob, I too am fortunate in this sense. and I intend to make good use of this interchange.

And Bill, Anderson SC is another great town for modeling. The interchange(s) in Anderson have a lot to offer.



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## ...what to include and not to include...

Sun, 2018-01-28 11:55 — Art Kuperstein

Following the lead in these recent posts, I can attest to the challenge of triaging inclusions and exclusions on my own evolving Ma & Pa. Initially was the difficult choice of eliminating the large Baltimore terminus on the bottom deck and then a larger town, Bel Air: mpr26.5 [just a bit north of Fallston: mp 22.3 and Vale: mp 24.2 (the modeled deck)], which would have been on the uppermost deck. Bel Air had a wye and wonderful operational destinations/industries, but alas I had to go with retention of two classic Ma & Pa bucolic scenes (to assuage the artistic side of my remaining geriatric brain).

Additionally - I made some choices regarding era specific operation and equipment:

1. Milk traffic in truss-rod wood reefers ended in late 1930's. The process continued in baggage/mail cars though. I wanted the reefers, so they will now be extant on my 1940's layout! Also they were set out on the Fallston team track for the farmers to load. More operation...yeah!
2. Diesels - M&PRR had EMD SW1 and NW@ in late 1940's. They will occasionally run on my railroad. I love Alco RS1 sounds and appearance! M&PRR never had one...except the one on loan on my model railroad. So there!
3. Industry - there was a tie yard at northern most border of Fallston. I have converted into a classic building supply facility on its own spur. Lots of in coming freight traffic.

More to come... 😊

Cheers,

Art

Art Kuperstein

M&PRRHS Editor - TIMETABLE quarterly

M&PRR c.1949

Langhorne, Pa

Ma & Pa RR Website-

<http://maparr.weebly.com>

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## Bel Air: mpr26.5 I've

Sun, 2018-01-28 12:11 — ctxmf74

*Bel Air: mpr26.5*

I've always thought Belair could make a great one town layout. Seems to have lots of interesting operational features in a fairly compact track plan. Combine Belair with some off scene staging and I'd expect a satisfying experience building and operating.....DaveB



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## Reefers are a problem. After

Sun, 2018-01-28 12:15 — JWhite

*Reefers are a problem. After a lot of grief I found a photo showing reefers alongside what looks like a factory. I do not know what the shipped or received so I may have to pull that out of my backside, but at least I will have my reefers! Should I ever find out what that facility shipped/received, they I will adjust.*

Reefers hauled a lot of freight that required a car that kept it dry. There was a discussion about this on the Steam Era Freight Car list a while back.

Jeff White

Alma, IL

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## Reefers?

Sun, 2018-01-28 12:21 — ctxmf74

Was there a meat dealer in town? or other food wholesalers?.....DaveB



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Bel Air: mp26.5

Sun, 2018-01-28 12:38 — Art Kuperstein

Dave, I agree with your description of Bel Air (later called Belair). It is an operationally appealing town. I am plagued or blessed with seeing almost everything with a painter's eye for composition, color, etc. of a scene in nature or on a railroad. That was the initial lure of the Ma 8 Pa for me. I even painted some of these impressions. Fallston in acrylics on canvas, is attached. It was not easy for me to excise Bel Air from my modeling plans. I hope to create some 3D paintings, with sound!!

Cheers,

Art

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Art Kuperstein  
 Editor - M&PPRHS Timetable  
 M&PPR c.1949  
 Langhorne, Pa.  
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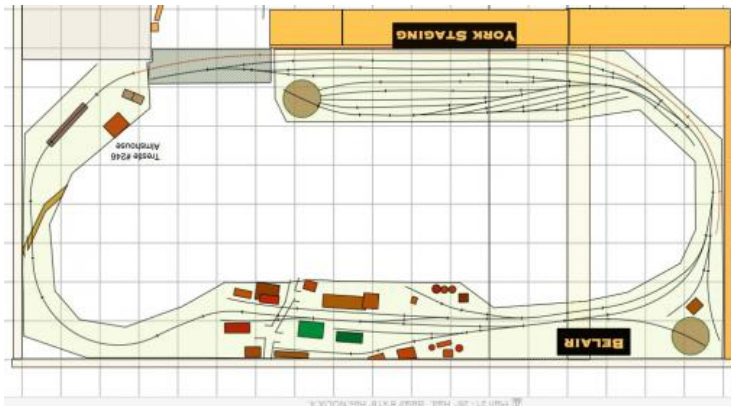
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## Bel Air: mp 26.5

Sun, 2018-01-28 12:49 — Art Kuperstein

This was to have been the upper deck with Belair and a staging yard.

Art





Art Kuperstein  
 Editor - M&PPRRHS Timetable  
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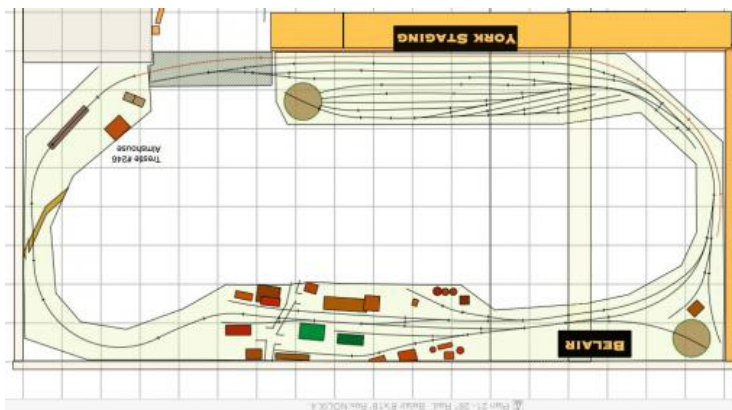
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## Bel Air: mp 26.5

Sun, 2018-01-28 12:49 — Art Kuperstein

This was to have been the upper deck with Belair and a staging yard.

Art



Art Kuperstein  
 Editor - M&PPRRHS Timetable  
 M&PPRR c.1949  
 Langhorne, Pa.  
 My MPRR website-  
<http://maparr.weebly.com>

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## Art - your painting

Sun, 2018-01-28 13:02 — James Six

I have a place on a wall in my home for that painting Art! 😊



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## Progress on the factory

Sun, 2018-01-28 13:10 — James Six

I finally got around to starting to paint the factory buildings. I started with the boiler house since it is the smallest component of my furniture factory. I applied the brick-colored paint and the first round of weathering. I will pose more photos as I progress.

This first pic is BEFORE painting.



This second pic is after painting. Note: I photoshopped the upper windows in the above photo experimenting to see what I liked best. I settled on the taller windows in the below photo.



More weathering and details along with window glass lie ahead. I am not satisfied yet with the weeds and grasses and will modify them before I call this area complete.



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## Just think the what to leave



Sun, 2018-01-28 13:20 — Virginian and L...

Just think the what to leave in what to leave out was a line from a song! It is very apt for model railroading. I am posting this from the club house as we had some visitors today. I was at home finishing my rewrite of the club constitution and by-laws so we can finally have an updated accurate version. My wife is finishing the task for me as she is much better at formatting the stuff than I am. Talk about a supportive wife!

Now I might need to work on a bit more track cleaning and then finish my coal tower for the main yard and engine terminal. I will add some more to my earlier post later to cover what I found that would work for me with regard to inclusion in a layout of limited space.

Keep in mind I was able to post nearly all of it in one prototype photo on one of these blogs, but I did trash the editor software when I did so and was then rescued by Joe F and the staff.

Rob in Texas

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## Fallston

Sun, 2018-01-28 13:24 — JackM

Art,

Many years ago I had an "Ma and Pa" love affair. It came from the MR book "More Railroads You Can Model" and growing up in Baltimore. I can remember going through those little towns on Sunday outings ( to Hershey, Gettysburg, Frederick, Western Shore) in Maryland/Pennsylvania in the back on un-airconditioned 1956 and 1969 Dodges, sticking to the plastic seat covers and listening to my dad cuss as "Fat Jack" Fisher gave up another home run. In the MR book there was a photograph of some old ranger sitting on the porch at the Fallston depot. For some reason that photo was interesting to me. Who was that guy and what was he waiting for?

Alas, I gave up on the Ma and Pa. At that time nothing but brass was available, far exceeding my budget. And operational interest looked minimal unless you wanted to model York, PA. But that was a long time ago when I thought you needed an empire. My has my thinking changed on that, partly because of this blog.

Jack

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## Standing back a bit more

Sun, 2018-01-28 13:35 — James Six

This photo shows the height of the smoke stack. Compared to the previous photos you can see that it is not taller. I like taller. Tie now to paint the foundation.



## Modeling 1925 thru 1935



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## Sage Advice

Sun, 2018-01-28 14:56 — Kriegswulfe

**" I would advocate following the route of the line that appeals to you and making a list of things you wish to include. I would also suggest that the items be listed in an order that would proceed from one compass direction to another. If there are multiple junctions going off in many directions it might be time to combine some of them for modeling purposes. " - Rob in Texas**

These words have been about the best thing I have read in a while when tackling the idea of layout design and what to include, exclude and that ever present monster selective compression. I have narrowed my area down to just 3-4 miles of railway. The bad part is there is about 48 miles of rail in that area. I have followed Rob's advice and and just literally took the map and put North on it and just spun it around noting what was visible and what I liked. My total area available to model is 19' X 2'6" along three walls. This method has eased the process of what I want to place on the layout and to what extent any track I want to put down. The great thing is I get a lot of railroads to work with as I have selected an area where the MKT, MP, ATSF, The Rock, SP, and a local wharf railroad all work together. Many thanks Rob...

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## Stack

Sun, 2018-01-28 15:05 — fecbill

Jim

What did you use for the stack on the furniture factory?

Bill Michael

Modeling GST, generic southern town, circa 1950-62

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Stack

Sun, 2018-01-28 15:23 — James Six

Bill,

The smoke stack is a one-piece Walthers smoke stack. It is an excellent model. There are two smoke stacks in the package for \$14.95. Very reasonably priced.

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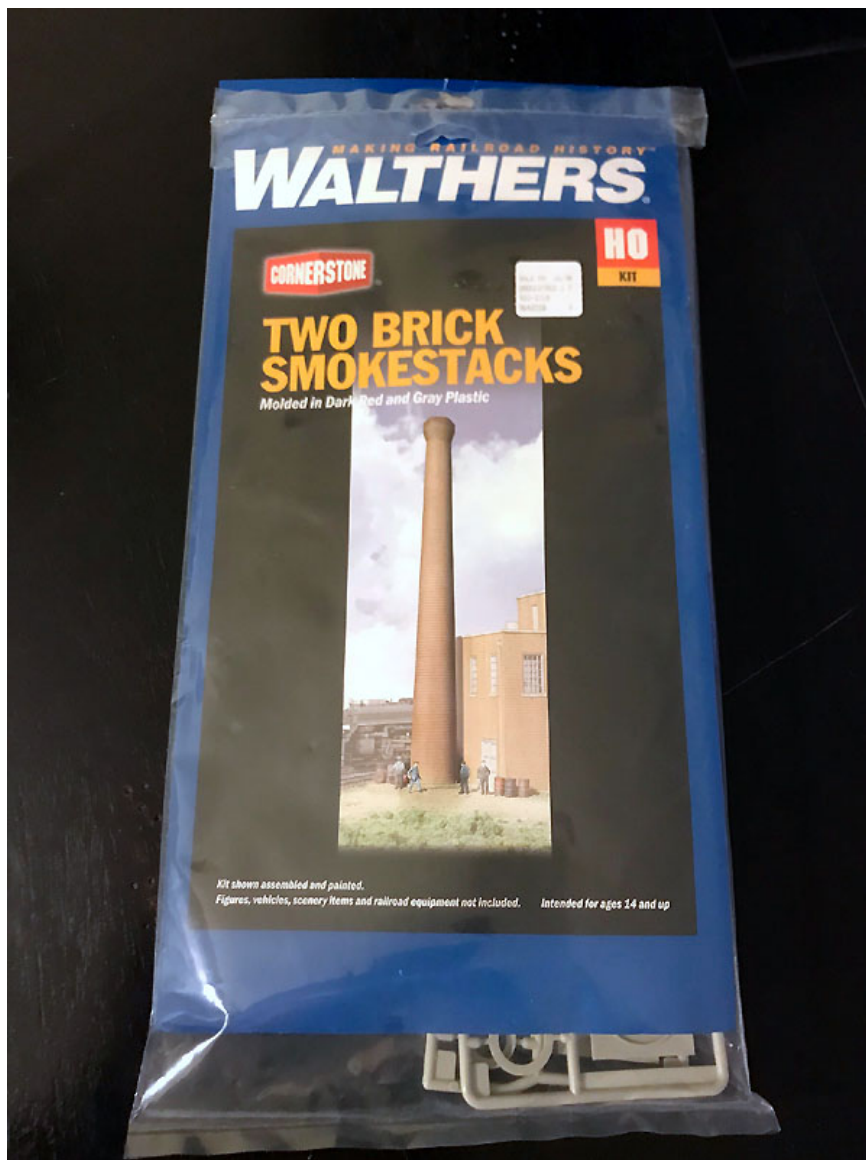
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## If I May Offer An Opinion

Sun, 2018-01-28 15:51 — kansaspacific1

Jim:

I like the taller windows that you changed to on the second floor. They look like they belong. (And not just because that's the way they are in the Woodland Scenics/DPM modules.)

Chuck

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## Chuck - If I May Offer An Opinion

Sun, 2018-01-28 16:46 — James Six

I agree Chuck. One nice thing about using Photoshop is that you can try different things "digitally" before you really do it. This saves a lot of grief. I thought for sure the shorter windows would look better, but after I saw them it became obvious that the taller standard windows are best.

Thanks sir. Your input and opinions are always welcome.



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## Sage Advice Sun, 2018-01-28

Sun, 2018-01-28 19:50 — Virginian and L...



### Sage Advice

Sun, 2018-01-28 16:56 — [Kriegwulfe](#)

***"I would advocate following the route of the line that appeals to you and making a list of things you wish to include. I would also suggest that the items be listed in an order that would proceed from one compass direction to another. If there are multiple junctions going off in many directions it might be time to combine some of them for modeling purposes."*** - Rob in Texas

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You are quite welcome. Thanks for your kind words. The ideas have been the result of reading things like this blog and having all the thought and discussion distill into some good ideas. The good ideas come from everyone. In years past we had the option of a few books on a subject and the opinions and thoughts shared by the author of said books. Now thanks to MRH we have many blogs where folks come together and talk nearly in real time and discuss a subject in depth. In many cases questions and comments will stir the creative juices and someone will share a great idea with the rest of us. One need only look at the read count and page count to see how valuable this venue is to those of us with model railroading in mind.

Rob in Texas

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## Era and the one-town layout

Mon, 2018-01-29 09:02 — James Six

One thing important that I have discovered since shifting my era from the 80s to the 50s and now 1925-1935 is that the farther back in time you go the shorter the length of both freight cars and trains. My cars are all 40' or 36' with many hoppers shorter. Compare this to 60' and longer cars of today and you will quickly see the advantage of modeling a time before WWII.

Since our premise for the one-town layout, at least most folks, is that we have seriously limited space for the layout. Modeling in the era of steam before WWII makes good sense. Unless you are pulling a long coal drag even locomotives were shorter in length. One 2-8-2 compared to two or three long modern GE or EMD diesels is seriously shorter.

Food for thought.



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## And better looking

Mon, 2018-01-29 10:43 — fecbill

The 2-8-2 is much more pleasing to the eye than the new fangled diesels. I quit liking diesels after the -2s on EMD and when GE changed designation from U23b to B23-7. Ugh for diesels give me Geeps, F units and Alcos.

Bill Michael

Modeling GST, generic southern town, circa 1950-62

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## A parallel conversation

Mon, 2018-01-29 10:57 — sailormatlac

I stumbled upon Mike Cougill's new blog entry. It's well worth a read as he sums up and threads exactly the same questions we've been trying to address here... to the point one could believe it was his own reply.

<http://www.ostpubs.com/cookie-cutters-are-for-cookies/>

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>

Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>



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## Matt - I'll check it out.

Mon, 2018-01-29 15:31 — James Six

Thanks Matt. I'll check it out.



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## I read it as well and think

Mon, 2018-01-29 16:13 — Virginian and L...



I read it as well and think he has missed a great many things.

One I do not want to fill an aircraft hanger even if I had unlimited resources of time and money. I do not want to maintain that nor would I want to supervise it if I hired other folks to do it for me.

Many of these so called experts have formulated ways for us to include our wants and desires while still maintaining things like access and operational enjoyment.

Givens and druthers are set by each individual not imposed on them by someone else. So they will not be out of touch with the artistic side unless that is forgotten by the modeler himself.

Layout design elements are not cookie cutter objects to be plugged in but are determined by the individual and designed by the individual. If not they are copied from the prototype or as often been the case here inspired by the prototype.

There is also value in his view points as it relates to trying to adopt a "canned" plan to ones space and particular layout desires. I suspect he is trying to ignore the nuts and bolts, ergonomics, and relevance of the design element so as to have scenic freedom. By doing so he could come up with a great diorama but would miss on the aspect of having an operating railroad.

The idea of not forgetting the artistic and the inspirational is something that needs to be stressed but the other things need to be kept as well. Together there is a synergistic approach where the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts, leaving out one of the parts leaves you with not a whole but a bucket of parts.

Others may have a different take on things but I believe all of the things mentioned need to be accounted for if one will have a railroad that will stand the test of time and get years maybe decades of enjoyment from the effort.

Rob in Texas

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## Cookie cutter

Mon, 2018-01-29 16:37 — p51



Mike's opinions are good in the overall, but in the end, you *still* are trying to fit as much 'cool' stuff as you can into a space far smaller than you would have liked.

It's easy to use buzzwords and phrase like, "synergy" or "layout flow" but in the end, you have a footprint for the layout and you need to figure out the track and other elements.

That varies wildly from layout to layout. I've been told by visitors that I have nailed it right on the head and by others that I missed the nail by a mile when it comes to design and elements. Frankly, all I see is what I wanted my layout to look like and how it doesn't match that view in almost any way.

Personally, I have seen too many 'folded dogbone' concepts when I was growing up and reading magazines like MR or RMC. You don't see that so much anymore and point to point layouts are way more common than they used to be (albeit, some are so large and folded over time and again, you couldn't tell unless you ran a train on it).

But a well-done layout is like the definition of art I've heard over the years; **you'll know it when you see it.**

Not every 'good' layout has the same elements. And not everyone will think it's good. Some will think you're the best layout builder ever, others will laugh behind your back for what they feel is a stumbling attempt that looks like two lumber trucks collided in a carpet mill.

I do chuckle at anyone who feels they have the answer to all this, as so many people over the years think they have the 'end all-be all' answer to *all* layout design and elements.

**LEE**



<http://www.freewebs.com/willysmb44/modeltrains.htm>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/53587910@N05/sets/72157668176638961>

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### I also have a one town

Mon, 2018-01-29 17:18 — sdacruz

I also have a one town layout, however for many years I was trying to work out a track plan on how to only pass the town once as I like continuous running and didn't like how the train would pass the town more than once. Well late last year I had a break-through! It took me seven years and many layouts and ripping up of layouts to get to this point. My shed is about 6 m by 4.5m with a workbench so not all the space could be used for the layout.

I have continuous running in an inner loop which for depicts the train running through the country (where the scene is monotonous - for the area I am modeling (Victoria, Australia), and the outer loop takes me to staging and the main town.

Anyway, now I am working on redesigning my staging yard.

Here is a small clip of my layout so far:

<https://>

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Regards  
Shelton

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## I really think this one town



Mon, 2018-01-29 18:48 — Virginian and L...

I really think this one town concept is one of the neatest ideas to come along in a while. In a previous post I was going to share a list of things I wanted on my model railroad. I am planning on two sceniced decks with upper and lower staging levels. The staging will represent locals that are not going to be on the modeled part of the layout but sent from the yard on my layout.

Lower main level will be Benwood Yard, engine terminal, Coal mine (one of the top 25 producing mines in the US was in Benwood until the recent war on coal).

Upper level Wheeling Steel Benwood plant, and National Tube works, the two plants will be merged into one. Wheeling Can Company, Bloch Brothers Tobacco Plant, Wheeling Tile works, Labell cut nail plant (sign on side of the building says largest in the world). Belmont Mill, Centre Foundry, Warwick China, Wheeling Stamping, a grocery warehouse. Wheeling Corrugating, Wheeling Rolls Steel Mill, Blaw Knox Foundry, Hazel-Atlas Glass, Wheeling Closure, Wheeling and Lake Erie freight house, Ott Heiskell, Wheeling Wholesale Grocery. Union freight warehouse, B&O freight House, Pennsylvania freight house.

Many of these buildings are easily represented by building metal buildings from foam core or plywood and covering them with printed paper which means instead of spending a fortune on the structures they can be modeled very economically. The mill buildings were often Red or Black in color.

As one would move along the city one would discover one plant just two or three blocks away from the last and in some cases right next to each other. If it turns out I have extra space that would not be filled by all of the things listed there are still more items in the way of industry that can be included. If it turns out the list will not fit the space I end up with I can begin cutting things out or shortening the length of line modeled.

Some compression of the space between industries will allow me to eliminate houses along the railroad lines and model them with low relief structures behind the industries.

I expect this could be made to fit in a room size between 560 and 800 sq feet much less than the average basement and well with in the space of a Texas out building still leaving room for a nice workshop and garage bay. I have many of those buildings pictured on my delving into the past blog. The other thing to keep in mind is that I am just trying to capture the flavor of the buildings and not build scale replicas.

If I manage to pull this off I will be a very happy camper to say the least. Now if something drastic happens and I need to begin cutting things out it would not take much to cut a bit here and there and still maintain the flavor of a busy industrial city.

Rob in Texas

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## Minimalist Outlook

Mon, 2018-01-29 20:49 — Kriegwulfe

Having read the " cookie cutter " article, I can understand a lot of what " Mike " tried to express. Like Rob however, I think several things are glossed over or not mentioned for various reasons.

*" We are conditioned in this hobby to want more and more. Thinking of a layout only in terms of its entertainment value, we go overboard in a futile effort to stave off boredom. Boredom doesn't come from outside circumstances it's an internal judgment we make. As we constantly focus on what we don't have: more room, more operation, more of everything, we can't appreciate or fully exploit the opportunities we do have that are right in front of our eyes. "*

This I can understand completely. I have read this thread quite a few times and one thing that really sticks with me is the idea of a " minimalist " approach that really points out more is not always better. I have a limited space, but there are others whom have even less. I have read where some model railroaders have great success and enormous fun with small inle style layouts and this gets me to thinking about what should I include in my current layout plans and appreciate the room that is afforded me.

Lee pointed out:

*" I do chuckle at anyone who feels they have the answer to all this, as so many people over the years think they have the 'end all-be all' answer to all layout design and elements. "*

In all honesty this is a very solid outlook but it also unsettles me a bit. I know next to nothing about model railroad design or operations. I try to educate myself when and where I can but in the overall scheme of things it's a bit scary to guess just how your efforts ring true with your dream versus reality.

Jim wrote this :

*" Since our premise for the one-town layout, at least most folks, is that we have seriously limited space for the layout. Modeling in the era of steam before WWII makes good sense. Unless you are pulling a long coal drag even locomotives were shorter in length. One 2-8-2 compared to two or three long modern GE or EMD diesels is seriously shorter. "*

I am suddenly wondering if my choice is suspect. I have chosen to model about 3-4 miles of track in Galveston Texas. I only have a bout 19 linear feet of bench-work to use. This precludes any form of dedicated " main line " running so I am limited to 3 to 7 cars and a single locomotive no matter what era I would choose. Is attempting a small interchange/shunting layout wrong? My choice of era ( the mid 80's ) suddenly looks a little dimmer but when using a 45 foot long switcher versus a 75 foot long 2-6-2 with tender, operations suddenly look a bit more positive in the light of train length and enjoyment.

I can certainly appreciate the forethought that has gone into the One-Town concept and the idea that this approach makes layout design a bit easier. The ideas and information presented in this blog have certainly opened my eyes to a whole new way to think or try to express my wants as a model railroader. I have spent more time lately in what NOT to include in my plans a lot more than what I want to put on the pine prairie. Maybe this is a weird thing but I find myself wanting to move some cars around, but I really abhor the idea of having the " spaghetti bowl " of track to contend with and all that is implied there.

Mike's cookie cutter article had this to say:

*" Instead of a narrow focus on operations as entertainment or a grand exercise in scenery, I want to share that immersive viewpoint I knew then and appreciate even more today. "*

My question here is I thought that everything we try to accomplish as modelers was to try and capture and preserve that " immersive viewpoint " that has and continues to draw us into this hobby and maybe try to pass it on to others when and where we can.....

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## alternative

Mon, 2018-01-29 21:01 — cslewis

Jim,

You should also be able to use a Great Northern 2-10-2. The GN also used the Belpaire firebox on their locomotives. But I'm pretty sure it's going to be a brass one. Tenshodo made them, and you don't see very many of them on e-bay. But it's a good place to look though.

Charlie

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## Wow! Y'all. . .

Mon, 2018-01-29 21:17 — James Six

wow! Y'all have been busy while I've been away today. I love it all!



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## @James Six

Mon, 2018-01-29 21:20 — Photo Bud

Oh, were you away? We hadn't noticed! (j/k - lol)

Bud (aka John), The Old Curmudgeon

Fan of Northern Pacific and the Rock Island



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## One town layout

Mon, 2018-01-29 21:58 — Don Hanley

I have been busy for a few days and getting back to this post, I was five pages behind. Great to see the strong support for the thread.

One thing I have seen only mentioned briefly is interchange trackages. In the town that I am modeling, Bluffton IN, the NKP Clover Leaf line ran east west through town as well as a NKP, LE&W division line running north south through town. I have chosen to model an interchange with the Clover Leaf line.

Modeling an interchange with another road allows the opportunity have cars come on the layout and be switched to one of the industries in my town, or forwarded onto the yard at Huntington. Also the cars can be dropped off for other industries that I don't have on the layout. I can have industries that the NKP services in town and the Erie brings the cars to NKP for final switching. In addition I can run cars on the layout that I have no industry for (refers for example) and set them on the interchange track.

These are just a few ideas on how an interchange track can be used. The beauty of an interchange track is it really takes up very little real-estate, but can generate a lot of traffic.

Don Hanley



Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## I agree with Jack here - I

Mon, 2018-01-29 22:11 — sdacruz

I agree with Jack here - I also attend op sessions and get bored pretty quick - and 30 mins to an hour is fine with me to play trains. Someone else posted the real need for staging - and I have to agree with him as well - if we are not going to conduct 3 hour op sessions - do we really need to waste all that space on staging? Maybe we can reduce staging yards from 6 tracks to 2? That's what I did.

Regards  
Shelton

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## Mike Cougill

Mon, 2018-01-29 22:43 — umauma railway

*As we constantly focus on what we don't have: more room, more operation, more of everything, we can't appreciate or fully exploit the opportunities we do have that are right in front of our eyes.*

This is the summary to his thoughts but the ideas of using imagination instead of project by rote is worth examining. The formula does take imagination but can stimulate it. That is entirely up to the individual.

If I had a basketball court size basement today the railroad I design (in HO scale) might only be 75 square feet or maybe up to 24" deep in places but long and linear. A city reduced to the backs of buildings and photo-backdrops would allow me to model more mainline and less of all else.

The prescriptive methods to do this are there by example but each time we draw from others to create something unique and satisfying. My goals are different from others but probably not by much. The ideas here have sparked my imagination and, although more than one town, my own layout has become more in focus. Thanks.

Neil Erickson, Umauma, HI

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## Photo Bud

Tue, 2018-01-30 07:38 — James Six

Yes, I was away until about 10:30 last evening. While I am retired now from my full-time day job, I still teach a few classes each week at Purdue U and at Ivy Tech Comm College. I teach 3D CAD, Engineering, Math and Physics. Monday is my teaching day.

## Modeling 1925 thru 1935



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concept and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Another vote for Bluffton

Tue, 2018-01-30 11:36 — Wabash Banks

Don,

I spent a good bit of time pouring over the Sanborn maps for Bluffton from 1919. WHAT A TROVE! I am still a while out from seriously starting that layout but in looking at it 40' of track, not unreasonable at all for a double decker, lets you model one end of town to the other with TONS of switching to do. I was amazed at how much industry there was from ag to lumber, coal, oil, and even a piano maker. I plan on using the track and place but freelancing my own RR, probably something like Wabash & Eastern or some such. It even comes with a chance to model a section of the Wabash river and really, with my user name, how could I resist?? The best part is that the track in that town lends itself really well to a shelf layout.

I will be very interested to watch your progress!!

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## Wabash Banks - Another vote for Bluffton

Tue, 2018-01-30 13:28 — James Six

You wrote: "I was amazed at how much industry there was from ag to lumber, coal, oil, and even a piano maker." . . . and may I add, the freight cars were so much shorter and you don't need a basement to model a really good layout. Maybe I should refer to one-town modeling as one room modeling!

This is one of the key factors that makes modeling pre-1950, particularly pre WWII so appealing as a time for modeling. There was so much more to model compared to more recent times. Many young folks don't get it because they know so little of that great time gone by. Their loss.



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## Another great aspect was that

Tue, 2018-01-30 14:34 — Wabash Banks

Another great aspect was that for some of the industries, they shared a block or two long spur but multiple industries would have had cars spotted. Dropped off the lumber and coal cars late yesterday and your back with more this morning? You can bet there will be cars to pull out to get into where you need while having to put those moved cars back where you got them. Interesting stuff, especially for a coal dealer... I'll put the maps together into an image and post it.

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## Bluffton Indiana 1919

Tue, 2018-01-30 15:58 — Wabash Banks

Here is the map for Bluffton. To the left of the bottom section is the piano factory and then the track moves to double track and heads west. To the north of sheet 1 the track goes to single track and crosses the Wabash River before heading east. The L.E. & Western southern track heads SE out of town.



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I am suddenly wondering if my

*I am suddenly wondering if my choice is suspect. I have chosen to model about 3-4 miles of track in Galveston Texas. I only have a bout 19 linear feet of bench-work to use. This precludes any form of dedicated " main line " running so I am limited to 3 to 7 cars and a single locomotive no matter what era I would choose. Is attempting a small interchange/shunting layout wrong? My choice of era ( the mid 80's ) suddenly looks a little dimmer but when using a 45 foot long switcher versus a 75 foot long 2-6-2 with tender, operations suddenly look a bit more positive in the light of train length and enjoyment.*

To me there is nothing wrong with what you are thinking of, it is merely a variation on what the others on here are talking about.

Your 3-4 miles of track can be considered the equivalent of one town.

As for era, like anything you need to be aware of the exceptions to generalities.

For example, trying to do the one town concept with 2-6-6-2 or 4-8-8-4 engines isn't going to work very well (unless perhaps an engine terminal) because they pulled what were long trains even allowing for shorter car lengths.

On the other hand in the "modern" era, the shortlines and industrial areas can be considered the equivalent of the steam era - you are back down to 1 engine instead of 3 or 4, short trains, no caboose to take up space, and as long as you are careful with your choice of industries you can avoid the really long freight cars.

So yes, in my opinion, what you are thinking of will work.

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## Pre-1950s

Tue, 2018-01-30 18:32 — sailormatlac



"This is one of the key factors that makes modeling pre-1950, particularly pre WWII so appealing as a time for modeling. There was so much more to model compared to more recent times. Many young folks don't get it because they know so little of that great time gone by. Their loss."

Indeed, when I got serious about building a suitable Erie fleet for my layout, it became quite evident variety in boxcar size was the norm before major bans that occurred circa 1954 (which virtually eliminated most wooden and 36ft cars that survived attrition after WWII). I do believe there is a lot of variety in other eras as well, but everything before the 50s is too often reduce to a caricature. Also, a lot of technological progress occurred between the early 1900s and the widespread adoption of standard steel boxcars. Many subtle variations could be observed and are indeed fun to model.

*"I am suddenly wondering if my choice is suspect. I have chosen to model about 3-4 miles of track in Galveston Texas. I only have a bout 19 linear feet of bench-work to use. This precludes any form of dedicated " main line " running so I am limited to 3 to 7 cars and a single locomotive no matter what era I would choose. Is attempting a small interchange/shunting layout wrong? My choice of era ( the mid 80's ) suddenly looks a little dimmer but when using a 45 foot long switcher versus a 75 foot long 2-6-2 with tender, operations suddenly look a bit more positive in the light of train length and enjoyment."*

*Don't forget we are discussing an approach, or more exactly a mindset and certainly not a recipe. What you describe makes sense and was tried with success by many modellers. Great layouts have been done this way. Just think of Jim McNab's Grimes Line which are the epitome of modern one-town (or rather one industrial park) approach.*

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>

Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>

## Don: Interchange



Tue, 2018-01-30 18:47 — sailormatlac

First, I'm glad to see I'm not the only one here unable to keep up with the posting rate! ;-)

Don, you certainly raise an interesting point here about interchanges. While they are often modeled on larger layouts, they are generally that "staging gimmick" to shove a few cars and pick up a few ones. Given the limited space we have however, considering the interchange as a focal point would be a very neat idea. As you mentioned, you can represent a full array of hidden industries which must be reached by setting out or picking up cars that have a meaning and a story to tell. Also, the idea of switching a train, standing in one place and looking at your locomotive running by an interlocking tower is a neat thing! Certainly a soothing vantage point for the most nostalgics among us and a great scene to photograph.

Just for the heck of it, I decided to see if modeling a full scale interchange as a one-town layout had merit. During lunchtime today, I doodled a quick comparison between my rendition of different locations on Erie's Dayton Branch, namely Maitland (a junction) and Richwood (your typical rural small town). I was surprised to see the junction scene was far to be a bad choice, on the contrary. You basically have 2 interchange tracks (westbound and eastbound) that can serve a few hidden industries, you've got a long team track and, as usually the case at junction, you've got a somewhat large industry. At the end of the day, what seems to be very diminutive is on equal footing with a regular one-town layout in term of operation. Not bad considering it's easy to model a simple interchange with less compression than a town.

Matt

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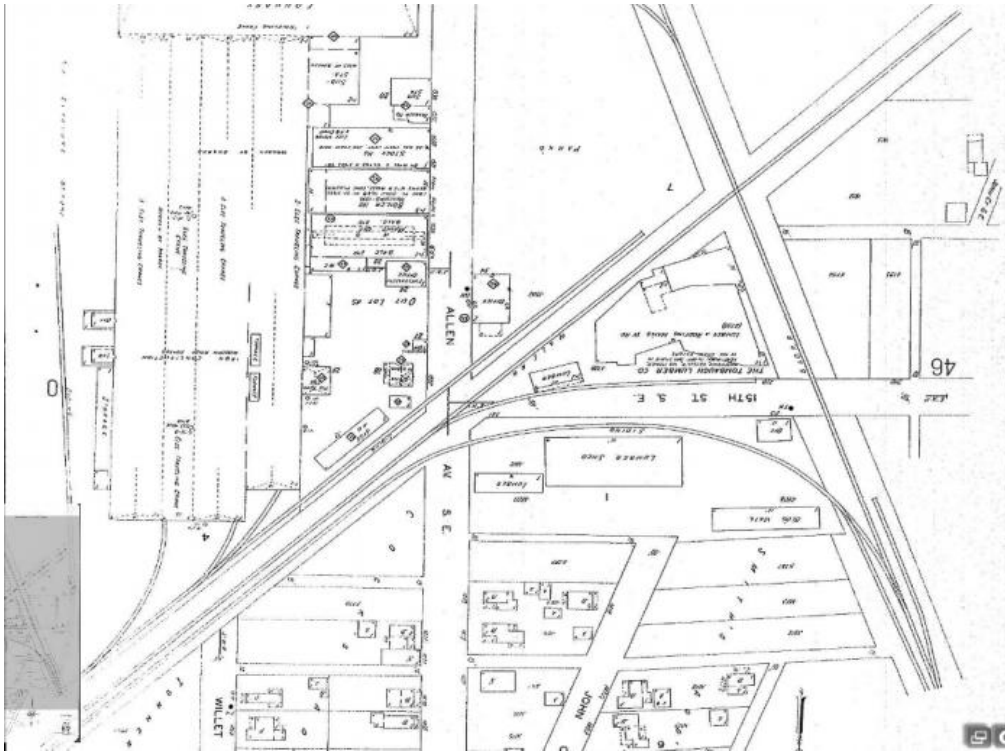
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## Active interchange on layouts

Tue, 2018-01-30 20:54 — Free-Mo Tim

Good evening all,

Permit me to share from a Sanborn Map of Canton, OH an active interchange I'm using on my layout. The vertical RR is the B&O and the line crossing is the Wheeling & Lake Erie ( pre 1950 ) and Nickel Plate ( post 1950). In this view, South is up.



In the timeframe of my railroad, the B&O would daily drop a cut of cars on their interchange siding for the NKP. The first Freight House job would stop and pick up these cars and sort them in Canton Yard about 3/4 mile to the lower left corner. The siding on the right side of the B&O line is an automobile scrap yard that was a regular online customer.

The Nickel Plate would bring returning interchange cars to the B&O as the second Freight House job crew returned to their home yard (Gambrinus) about 3 miles away to the upper right corner.

I have swapped cars from the B&O to and from the NKP many times as a mini-ops session. Running at restricted speeds, I can spend a very pleasing 45 minutes and keep the track clean at the same time.

This is one of the 2 active interchanges planned for this layout. The other will be inbound traffic (only) from the PRR Ft. Wayne line through Canton.

Thanks for looking!

Tim Moran Akron, OH

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## Narrow shelf layouts

Wed, 2018-01-31 08:56 — James Six

Note: This message is about shelf layouts and not bench layouts.

There is a lot of talk these days about narrow shelf layouts. I am not in any way convinced that the "narrow" shelf layout is the right way to go for most of us following along with this blog. In my simple mind two of the popular types of layouts are those designed for operating through trains from one town to the next to the next, that is, from terminal to terminal. Bill Darnaby's Maumee and Tony Koester's Nickel Plate are two such layouts that have met with a lot of success. Face it, they are great layouts! Another thing to face up to and that is we here following along with this blog probably do not have the space in our homes to build such layouts. That is what this one-town layout blog is all about - us mortals who have to build our layouts in much more limited space.

Mr.Darnaby is promoting shelf layouts as narrow as 6-inches. He is right. That is all one needs of you are building a layout like his and Tony's with long stretches of countryside between towns. However, that is not us in this group. The one-town layout is about the one town and not the countryside between towns. I suggest that we need a wider shelf. I suggest that we make our shelf layouts with the shelf ranging from a minimum of 12-inches up to a maximum of 24-inches. My layout has a 24-inch deep shelf all along the main part of the layout shown in the picture below. When I get to rebuilding the other side of the layout I may tear out the long, 24-inch shelf there and replace it with a 16-inch shelf or maybe 18-inches.

Why is the wider shelf (wider than less than 12-inches) necessary in my opinion? Glad you asked! LOL Because a one-town layout has to include at least part of our one town, we need more real estate than a layout such as Bill's or Tony's that

on the narrow shelf only have some bucolic country side to model. We need to include industry and businesses that we will switch with a town switcher or with a local freight that arrives to switch the town then leave town.

In the photo below you see my furniture factory, a serious elevator business that has feed, supplies, lumber, grain, and feed along with coal! All of this needs space. Beyond in my plant that receives reefers for meat and/or produce. It too needs some room to model effectively. Around the corner barely in the photo are two more elevator businesses that will have coal and/or oil along with the feed mill/elevator. All of this needs some room to model, certainly more than a 6-inch shelf.

Keep in mind that I am not at all against a narrow shelf layout. I am all for it when building a layout such as that of Bill Darnaby or Tony Koester. However, I don't think it works for us unless we have extremely limited space for the layout. In that case partial and whole buildings like I use would have to be traded for building flats.

Let's discuss this folks. 🤔



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## Narrow Shelf Layouts

Wed, 2018-01-31 10:25 — jonathan jones

Hello, Jim. I am coming to this discussion a bit late, but love the topic and I am following through on these ideas with my own layout, an N-scale rendition of the CNJ's urban terminal at Broad Street in Newark, NJ.

There are a lot of interesting points here. Yes, we can't all have monster layouts, but the 6-inch depth "standard" is really meant to facilitate maximum use of the space available for that style of layout. Depth is minimized (1) to gain length of run, (2) to maintain aisle space, and (3) to minimize scenery construction when the features being modeled are homogenous and lack big changes in width or depth. If the layout design doesn't require these items, especially length of run, then yes, the 6-inch depth becomes a much less important standard to follow.

That's where scale comes in. In N-scale, 6-inch deep benchwork is enough to work with for a small town. It may require use of flats for buildings, but that's ok in many cases. Alternatively, if a modeler did want a Maumee or Koester-style layout, the 6-inch depth AND the use of N-scale would be a great combination and might make that kind of layout possible in a smaller space where it wouldn't work in HO. If the shelf widened to 8 inches or so at town locations, that would really open up the opportunities. In my opinion, scale is also a design choice and should also be considered when working with rules-of-thumb in the early stages of design.

I also think modelers can help themselves a bit. For example, does a town really need full-depth structures up against the backdrop or will the scene work with flats? The answer to this can make a big difference in depth of the shelf. Sometimes a 16-inch shelf could become a 10 or 12-inch shelf if flats are used.

For what it's worth, my own layout is on a shelf about fifteen feet long with a 6-foot staging yard on one end. The depth varies from 21 inches at one end, where the station terminal and team tracks are located, to 12 inches at the other end (right before staging) which has a double track mainline and two parallel industry tracks with room for structures (full depth and flats) next to the tracks.

Jonathan

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Two observations as always

Thu, 2018-02-01 06:55 — Douglas Meyer

Two observations as always everything does not apply to everyone. The shallow shelf is not very conducive to modeling a railroad located at the bottom of a 900 foot gorge. That hill right behind looks odd if only a 2d photo.

And Sanborn maps are only available of some locations not all. As far as I can tell there are no Sanborn maps of the C&O New River Subdivision in West Virginia. I assume this is because the reason the maps came into existence was not a pressing in this area.

-Doug Meyer

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Thu, 2018-02-01 07:54 — jonathan jones

Regarding the steel mill images and shelf width, this is where the artist's quote can help.

Never try to duplicate what's there. Interpret. Plein air painting is all about observation and interpretation, not about reproducing every feature or copying exact details of a specific location.

— *Shuang Li*

A depth of 24 inches might not be enough if you think you have to model everything. But if you make different choices about how to model something, 24 inches might be more than enough. There are many ways to depict other buildings in a large complex, which is why it's important to be a ruthless editor in order to determine if you really need to model *everything*. It may seem the obvious choice to show everything, but as the artist's quote suggests, and contrary to standard methodology in model railroading, this might not be the best way to get the feeling of the place. Suggesting the rest of the structures in some more abstract way might actually be more effective than replicating everything exactly. In some ways this can be like reading the book instead of seeing the movie. The book is usually more effective because a lot of things are suggested which allows the reader to fill in the rest with their imagination. If a modeler can come up with a creative way to achieve this they can save a lot of space, a lot of modeling time, and have a more effective and visually striking layout.

Jonathan Jones

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sorry....here are the piccies

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## Rob - Jim I will agree with your go . . .

Thu, 2018-02-01 08:35 — James Six

Good morning Rob! 😊

I hear you. But I also would like to offer how I would tackle your situation. First, I would not model it all in 3D. I would select only those items that would be alongside the tracks that you feel you must have. The rest would be part of a photo backdrop immediately behind the key buildings you model in 3D. This combination of 3D models and 2D photo backdrop would provide the feel that you are after and minimize the shelf depth that you need. I have seen this done before to great effect.

What you need to do before starting on the layout in the steel mill area is to pre-determine just what MUST be modeled in 3D and what does not. I realize that this could be a tough decision making process, but this is not the real world and you are NOT building a real steel mill. As model railroaders we all need to accept the limitations we face and make the best, most effective compromises that we can.

Your layout will be larger and much more complicated than mine, but that is no reason not to be selective in what you model in 3D and what you leave to the 2D photo backdrop. Make the right selections/decisions and I know you will be happy.

You bro in Indiana,



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## Tim - Good evening Robert, I am . . .

Thu, 2018-02-01 08:38 — James Six

Hi Tim! 😊

Thank you very much. Just keep in mind that I may have started this blog, but I feel that it belongs to all of us who contribute, discuss, and read it. We have become sort of a community within the hobby. I'm loving it!



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## Mdvle - Shelf Width

Thu, 2018-02-01 09:18 — James Six

Mdvle,

I completely and totally agree with what you wrote! LOL Seriously. 😊

Your suspicion that the narrower the shelf the more the backdrop will be noticed is somewhat true. I have seen one exception to this and that is Tom Johnson's layout. His layout shelf is half the width of mine, or less. Tom has pulled off with brilliance. But Tom is a master artist. I believe mortals like the rest of us would have more difficulty with a narrow shelf.

Another thought is that the narrow shelf works better where there is simple countryside as compared to steel mills and other structures! Right Rob in Texas?



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## jonathan - Artist's Quote and Steel Mill Images

Thu, 2018-02-01 09:25 — James Six

you and I are saying the same thing in slightly different words, . . . so I have to agree with you Jonathan! LOL

You said that *"it's important to be a ruthless editor"*. Wow! That is so very important. Most people find it really difficult to edit out things that in the beginning they believe that they need and must have. I feel that the inability to be a ruthless editor is a root cause of failure of many model railroaders who build layouts. We don't need to model all of that "stuff"!!! It can be represented with photo backdrops and in some cases building flats, although I don't like building flats in most situations. Flats work when wedged between more 3D models, but not when out in the open.

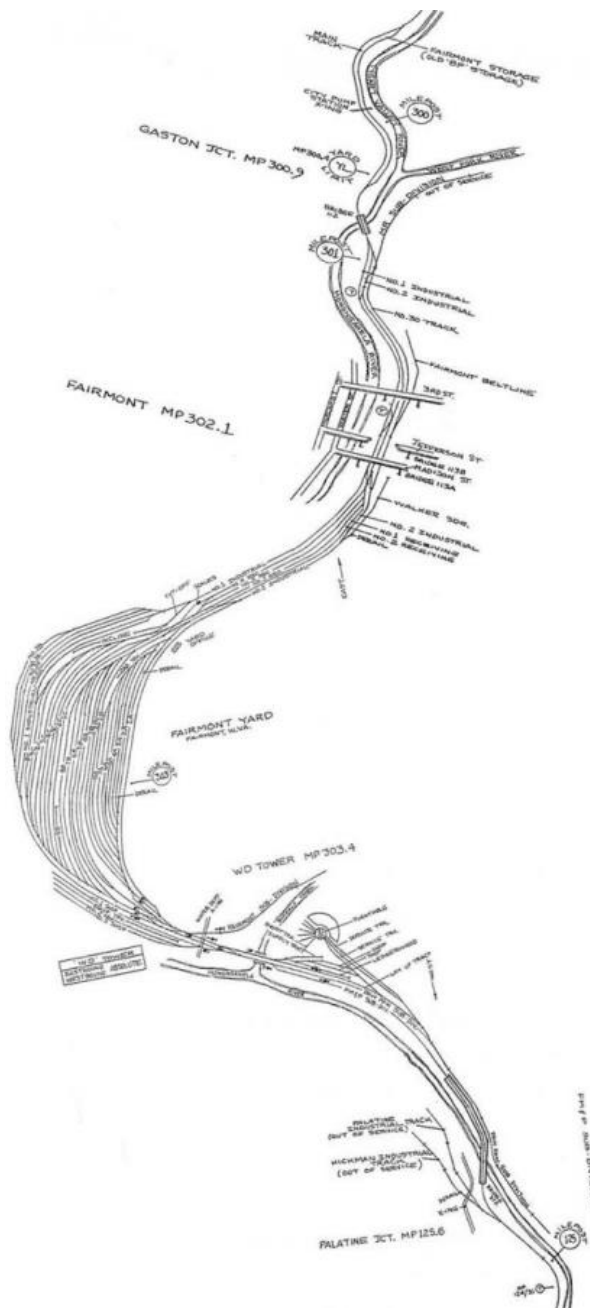


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## Industrial branches

Thu, 2018-02-01 09:34 — Eric H.

Tim and Rob point out something that I've been noticing for over a decade. There are many prototype towns that offer more than one possibility for modeling. Here's an example that I have used in more detail as a presentation at RPM meets. Fairmont, WV, was a busy place on the B&O but we don't all have the space to model the big picture. North is toward the bottom of this image. Click on any image here to review a larger size.



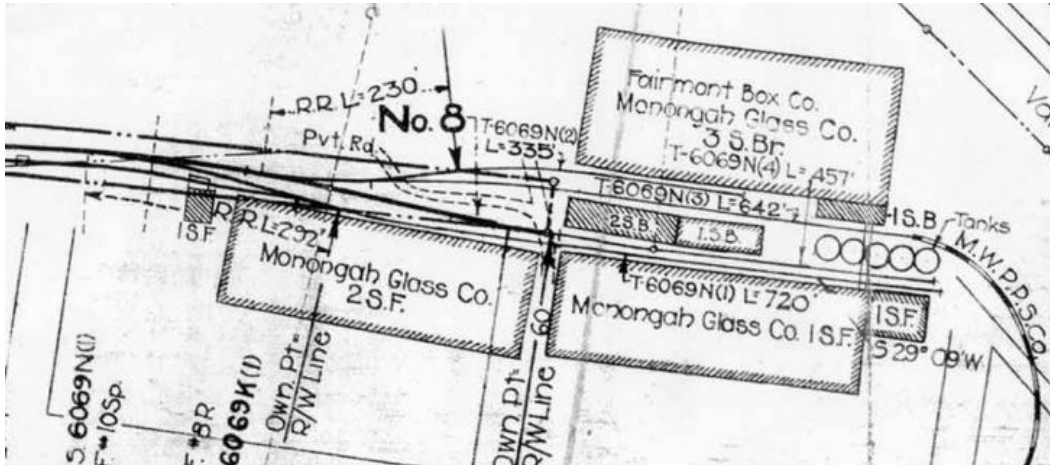
This 1970s era drawing shows about six to seven miles of the B&O. The original mainline went through Fairmont. At milepost 301, near the top of the map, the MR Subdivision came in from Clarksburg and funneled lots of coal into the yards. Just beyond the yards, at WD Tower, the original mainline heads off the map toward the Ohio River and Wheeling. This is marked as Fairmont Sub-division. Two other sub-divisions enter the yard here from the north, the Paw Paw and FM&P subdivisions. The FM&P went north to connect at Connellsville, PA, with another busy B&O line.

That's the setting of Fairmont and it all looks HUGE for most of our spaces, even though it's only six or seven miles. But we can find small parts to model here. Just above the bridges on this map is a stub line marked "Fairmont Belt Line".

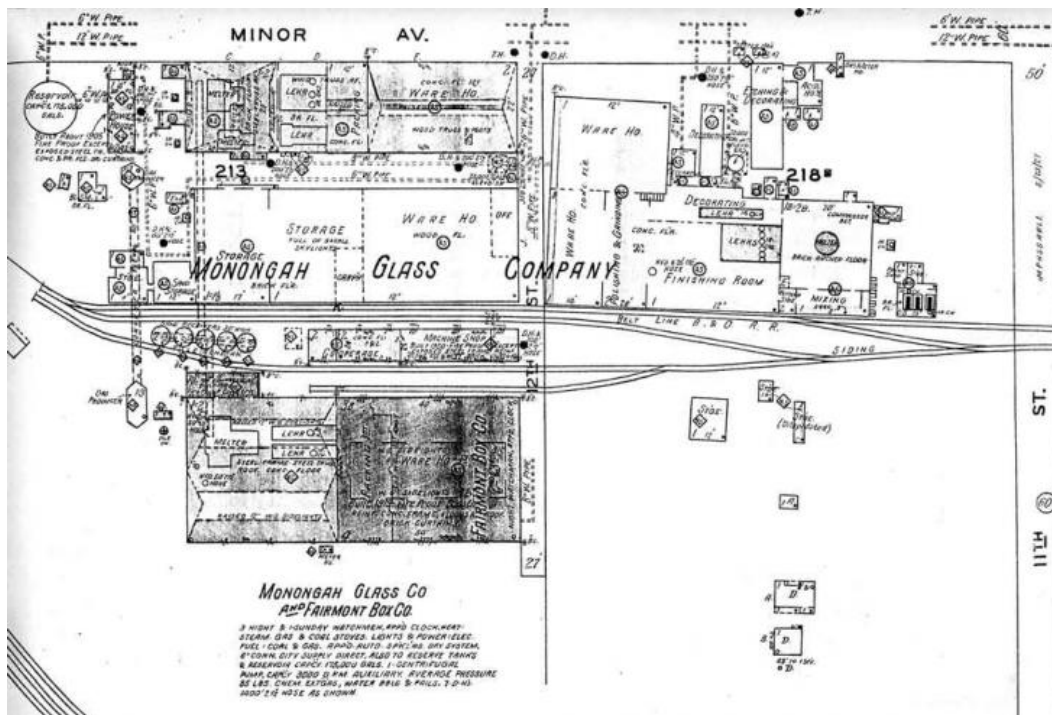
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2215	17		12				6069J	6069J	Fairmont Supply Co.		396.3		
2216	17						6069K	6069K	Fairmont Wall Plaster Co.		396.3		
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2226	70						6069W	6069W	Repair Yard		396.9		
2227	70						6069P	6069P	Federal Junction (2225)		396.9		
2228						WD	6069X	6069X	W D Tower (2225)		396.9		
2229									End of Double Track		397.0		
2230									Company Siding		397.0		
2231	13						6069X	6069X	Yard Limit Board		397.2		
2232					1-WV-45.1		2024	2024	Barnestown—K		397.9		
2233							2025A	2025A	Consolidation Mine No. 35—MG		397.9		
2234	35		10								398.2		

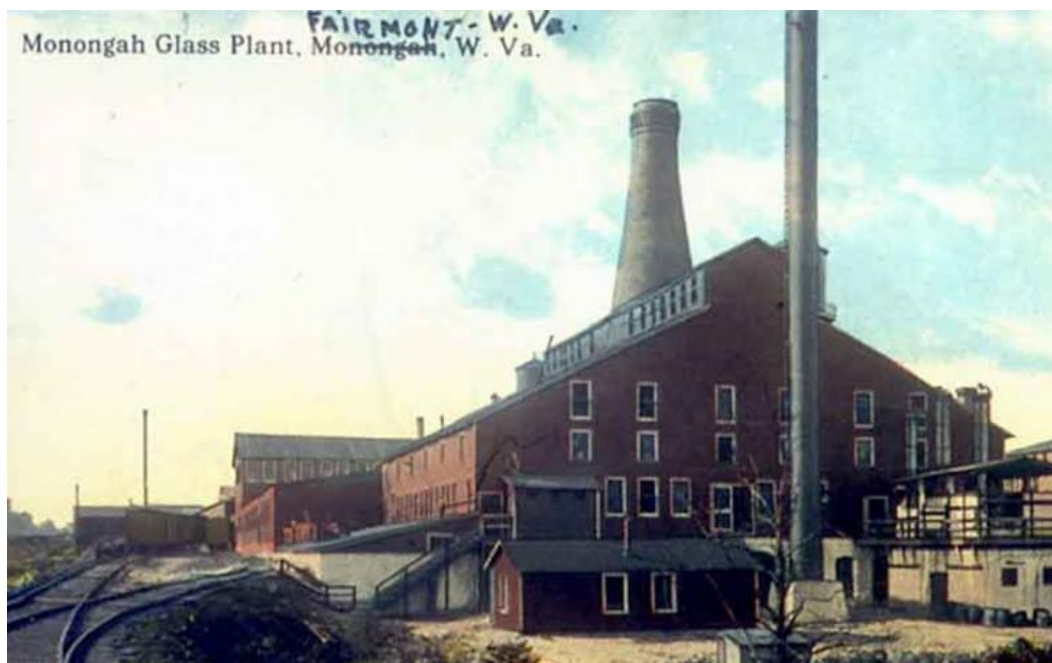
This is a portion of a 1954 B&O Form 6 book that lists all railroad facilities and customers with direct service. Reprints are available from the B&ORHS covering a number of different years. These books are a goldmine of information. We see the Fairmont Belt Line served several local industries in 1954. note the length of this line is only 1.2 miles. At the left side are columns with siding capacity information. Lastly, the industries served are a varied lot.



I researched a variety of resources. A visit to the ICC valuation files in the Archives II facility of the National Archives was productive. The entire Belt Line was on one valuation map. An excerpt is seen above.



I lived in Morgantown, WV, when the Belt Line caught my interest. West Virginia University is there and the library is a repository to many Sanborn Fire Insurance maps that cover many West Virginia towns. A few visits to the West Virginia & Regional History Collection were productive. Fairmont is well covered by Sanborn and copies of several maps were obtained. A portion of one is seen above.



A few bids on eBay netted some great historic post cards that tied in with the Belt Line. The glass factory above is the same plant seen on the two map excerpts. A couple field trips to the location in 2005 found several original buildings in place. The Belt Line had been abandoned for a few decades but remnants were easy to find.

Fairmont had two other interesting B&O industrial branches that have model railroad potential. The Palatine and Hickman Run branches came off of the FM&P subdivision near the bottom of the first map. They also served a variety of industries including a coke works, can factory, and the largest Coca-Cola bottle manufacturing plant in America.

More details on the Fairmont Belt Line can be found in the Layout Design Journal. This example and a few others were part of an article titled "Modeling a Mile" in LDJ-41, published in the Winter of 2011.

There's lots of inspiration out there and it isn't difficult to find an interesting stretch of railroad to guide your layout efforts. The Layout Design Journal has published quite a few pieces on manageable sized layouts that follow a prototype. Do not overlook that publication of the [Layout Design Special Interest Group](#) as you tackle a new project.

Eric

Eric Hansmann  
Murfreesboro, TN

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<http://designbuildop.hansmanns.org/>

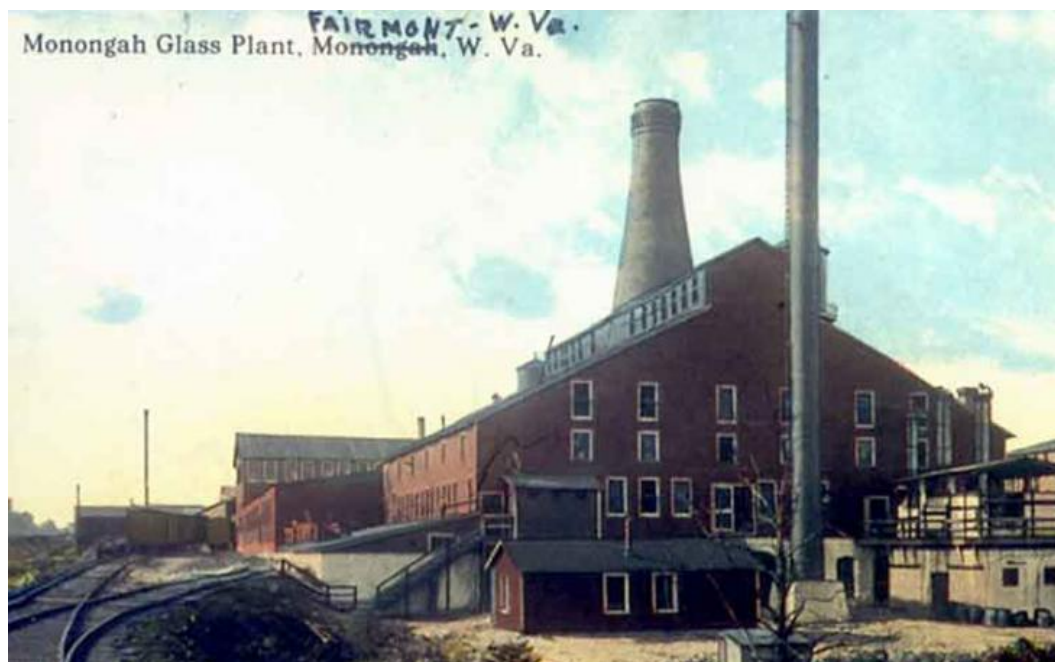
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## Eric H - Industrial branches

Thu, 2018-02-01 09:47 — James Six

Eric,

From the looks of that big smoke stack, I will wager that the glass plant received coal shipments. 😊



A few bids on EBay netted some great historic post cards that tied in with the Belt Line. The glass factory above is the same plant seen on the two map excerpts.



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## Glass Plants

Thu, 2018-02-01 10:20 — Eric H.

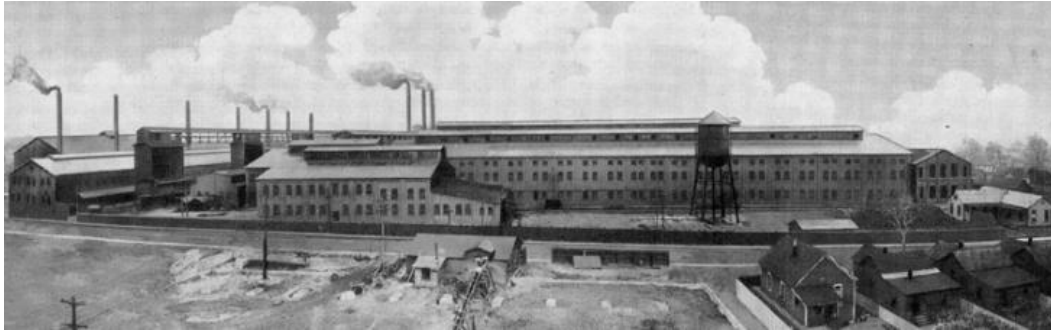
Jim,



Coal would bring impurities into the glass manufacturing processes. Most glass plants in WV, OH, and PA were fired using clean burning natural gas.

BTW, the bottle-shaped stack was where the melt occurred. I suspect the tall stack is near the annealing ovens. Glass is a forgotten industry that was a big employer. Take a look at your cupboards and replace any plastic vessels with glass. Replace all of those plastic pop/soda/beverage bottles at the grocer with glass. The glass industry was the #2 employer in West Virginia for decades. WV, PA, and OH were the top three glass producing states for decades. All that started to slip after WW2 as plants consolidated to be more efficient then plastics came into use in the 1960s.

Many glass plants had a box factory nearby and sometimes as a part of the plant. Sand was delivered in box cars and unloaded by hand at many plants.



This is a Pittsburgh Plate Glass plant in Kokomo, Indiana.

Eric

Eric Hansmann  
Murfreesboro, TN

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## Eric H - Glass Plants

Thu, 2018-02-01 10:34 — James Six

Hmmm . . . interesting. So, back in the 1900 to 1940 period such glass plants were natural gas fired? Nocoal for boilers for heat, etc.



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

- [Layout design](#)

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Eric H - Glass Plants

Thu, 2018-02-01 10:34 — James Six

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## Heat?

Thu, 2018-02-01 10:46 — Eric H.

There were no coal deliveries at glass plants that I have found. Some plants may have fired using coal, but not the ones I've come across.

Keep in mind a glass factory has huge ovens that melt sand, soda ash, and other additives to make molten glass that is formed into tableware or plate sheets. Once those are formed, they are sent through annealing ovens to temper the shape. I don't think the main rooms of these plants were heated.

Offices and the cooperage areas may have been heated but I suspect natural gas was used to fire boilers to heat those areas.

Eric

Eric Hansmann  
Murfreesboro, TN

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## I could no coal

Thu, 2018-02-01 11:06 — Wabash Banks

I could see no coal at all for an industry. If you have to go to the effort of putting in the gas lines and such you might as well go all in and use the resource fully. No storage for the coal, no track dedicated to it, no having to have it brought in by vehicle...also depends greatly on what is available at that locale.

The town I live in prospered greatly at the turn of the 20th century due to the discovery of natural gas. LOTS of industry moved here and things went really well except that they thought it would last forever and treated it like that. Wells burning day and night. Crazy thinking now but they thought it was limitless. Turns out not so much and when it ran out the town massively downsized as the business moved away to better managed resources. The next big go around for the town was when the Remy brothers moved here from Dayton Ohio. They jump started the next big wave. At one time there were 23 brands of autos manufactured here. Some still used natural gas as it wasn't 100% depleted, most used coal. Some even still tried to use water. The Indiana Hydraulic Canal was put in well after canals were dead around here. It was built like a regular canal with towpath but it was meant to have moving water to supply power. In 1874 they opened the gates and the berm promptly blew out in lots of places. They fixed it and opened it again to suffer the same results. They called it quits after a loss of \$80000 1800's money...All that to say looking at things historically in the are you are modeling might reveal some options you haven't noticed and if you are free lancing well then the sky is the limit.Include current forms and remnants of past power production. Today you can still see the Indiana Hydraulic Canal. Google has recently updated their maps and it is now a summer image but you can still make out the path in places. On the old winter maps it was a dark line paralleling the river.If you following along the river on the map link below it is keyed to the start of the canal, the line cutting the curve out of the river. If you switch to 3d you can kind of follow along the river you can see a ridge in the trees that shows the path. At one point a power line clearing reveals the hump of the tow path in 3d. Anyway, just throwing it out there that power has been generated multiple ways and those ways don't entirely disappear sometimes.

<https://www.google.com/maps/@40.11741,-85.5835213,283a,35y,39.35t/data=!3m1!1e3>

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"What you need to do before

Thu, 2018-02-01 11:13 — ctxmf74

*"What you need to do before starting on the layout in the steel mill area is to pre-determine just what **MUST** be modeled in 3D and what does not."*

This is where thinking in terms of what was seen from trackside instead of what was seen from an aerial view or on a map . A modeler's aisle view that replicates the prototype's trackside view should give the most true to life feeling if it is done correctly. Aim for the overall feeling ,not for a bunch of overstated details to distract the viewer's eyes and thoughts.....DaveB



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## ctxmf74 - "What you need to do before . . ."

Thu, 2018-02-01 11:36 — James Six

AMEN !!! 👍



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## Backdrop v. 3D modeling

Thu, 2018-02-01 11:48 — Art Kuperstein

Hi Rob,

Many of you may have seen Mike Confalone's Allagash Ry. He modeled the St. Regis paper mill, quite large, in an approximately 2 x 6 foot area. Not really a narrow shelf situation, but perhaps it might provide some influence. He employed a technique that Jim just mentioned - backdrop plus some 3D modeling.

Art



Art Kuperstein

MPRRHS Editor - TIMETABLE quarterly

M&PRR c.1949

Langhorne, Pa

Ma & Pa RR Website-

<http://maparr.weebly.com>

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## Indiana glass business

Thu, 2018-02-01 12:46 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

Jim, I know you're not a Hoosier but Indiana had a glass manufacturing center near Gas City due to the availability of natural gas. Unfortunately the gas played out so the glass manufacturing left that area. Today there is a glass plant in Lapel, IN.

Art, I didn't realize how "generic" a paper mill can be with the modern blue buildings. Where the locomotive is switching looks just like the Kimberly-Clark plant in Munising, MI served by the LS&I, then WC and now CN. I certainly can't tell where the model ends and the backdrop begins. Does the model capture the smell, too? Excellent modeling!

Robert

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## Lapel

Thu, 2018-02-01 13:01 — Wabash Banks

While it is certainly not a 40's looking facility, it is on my way to and from work. If you would like photo's or specific info let me know. I believe Charles who has commented on this thread is actively modeling that area.

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## @dssa1051 "Does the model capture the smell, too?"

Thu, 2018-02-01 14:41 — Photo Bud

Just imagine the smell of coal dust by coal yards and mines, the smell of flowers by the gardens, the smells of bread by the bakeries, the smell of cow pies by the farm, the smell by the outhouses... Oh, maybe odorless is best! lol

Bud (aka John), The Old Curmudgeon

Fan of Northern Pacific and the Rock Island

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## Da funk...

Thu, 2018-02-01 15:17 — p51



*Just imagine the smell of coal dust by coal yards and mines, the smell of flowers by the gardens, the smells of bread by the bakeries, the smell of cow pies by the farm, the smell by the outhouses... Oh, maybe odorless is best!*

Yeah, I would never want to experience the olfactory version of the 30s or 40s. Nope, *not one bit*.

The whole, "taking a bath once a week, whether I need it or not" bit wasn't so much of a joke for many people then. Deodorant was almost unheard of back then, and I imagine the horrible funk you'd experience walking into a building full of people in a pre-air conditioning era, especially in the summer time.

Oy, I had enough of awful funk of people and stuff in the military, thank you very much!

**LEE**



<http://www.freewebs.com/willysmb44/modeltrains.htm>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/53587910@N05/sets/72157668176638961>

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### I have a couple of blast

Thu, 2018-02-01 16:38 — Virginian and L...

I have a couple of blast furnace kits, 3 rolling mills, several coke ovens, a blower house and piping, several overhead cranes, and will be building an open hearth furnace. This will be a major feature of the layout. It will represent two mills, the tube works and wheeling steels Benwood plant in a combined setting. They were only four blocks apart in reality. Many other structures were rather ordinary large black boxes with some vents and a stack or two. They will be easy to model with foam core and possibly a steel mill flat from plaststruct.

I have been looking at some design elements and with a depth of 30 inches instead of 24 I will be able to put in a reasonable number of tracks between the aisle and the structure and fit the hillside in behind.

One thing that works out well for me is 30 inches will let me put in the main and a siding and a yard in that depth as well. I suspect I will not have a turnout more than 12 to 16 inches from the edge of the layout maximum and most will be within the first six inches.



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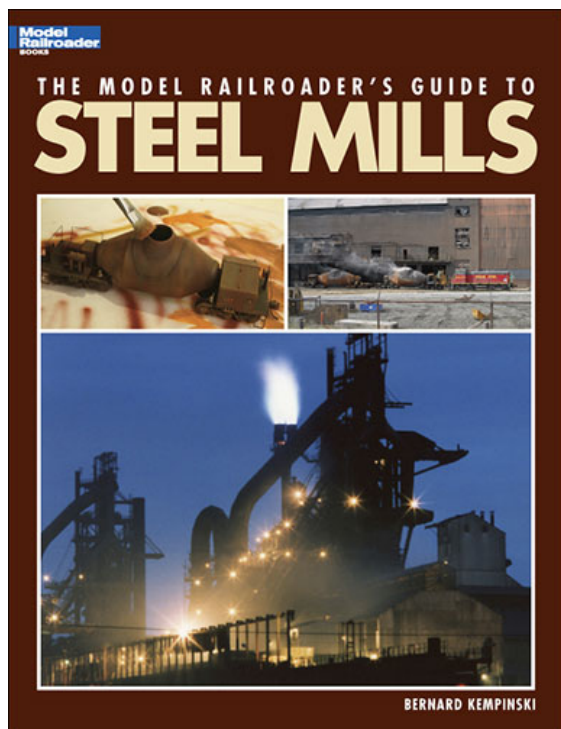
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The visual appeal of these massive 3d structures at near eye level is going to be very impressive. A great book on the subject is

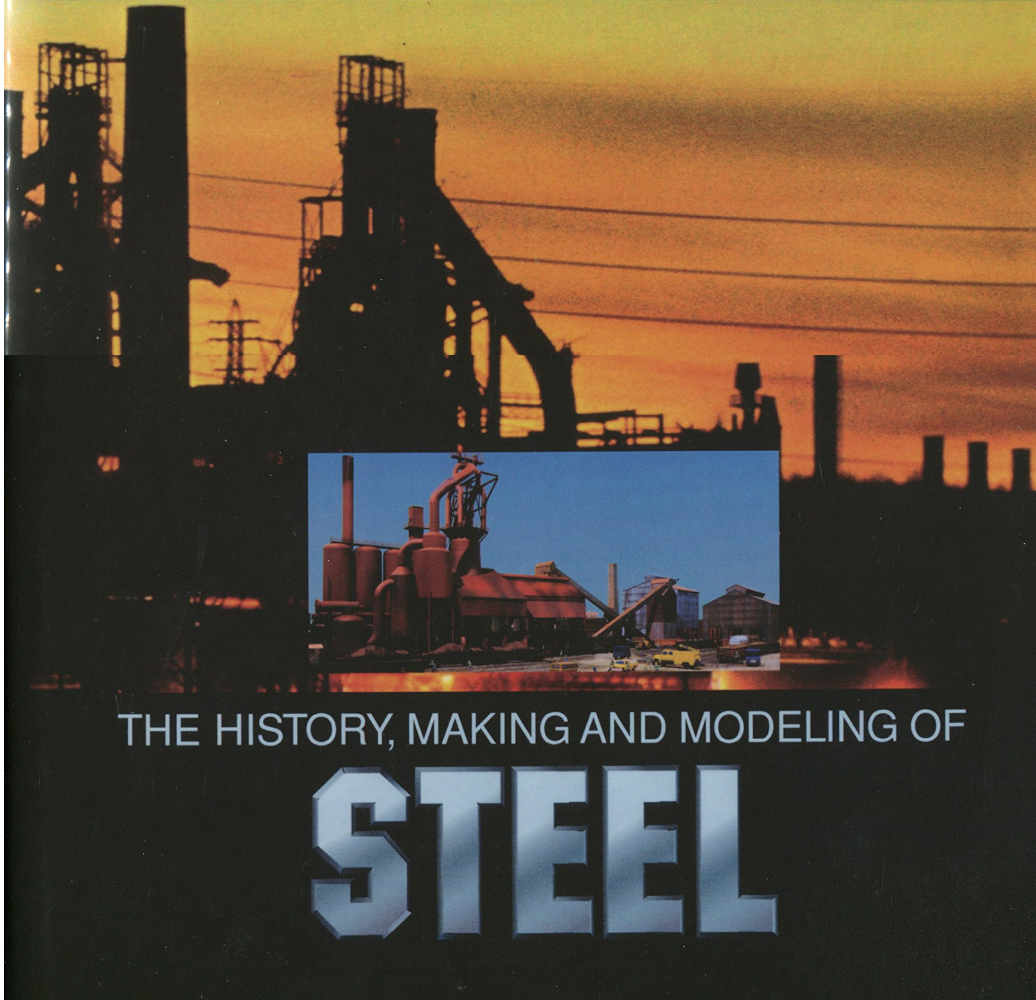
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Another is the book

# DEAN FREYTAG



There are others but these models are very imposing even though they are compressed. For me this really is an important consideration. Now as to the back drops etc those are great ideas to pop in behind these models and it also makes modeling the other large industries in town practical as well.

Adding 6 inches of width to allow for some really massive structures is a good use of the layout space for me.

On another topic the glass industry that Eric mentioned in his posts was very prevalent in Wheeling and the surrounding areas. One thing folks think of in terms of industry is coal which was plentiful and still is. But there was lots of natural gas available as well. There was also tile made in town and china. The Hazel Atlas company had a large building in town for their offices. During WWII they used some of it to make penicillin. I believe there were five producers of glass products in town not counting the china factory or tile factory. In near by locations there were more that would have been served by local trains in the area.

For the town and setting I wish to model 30 inches will work just fine. In thinking of it it sounds huge but it will be a far cry from a basement filler and smaller than my clubs present layout in foot print which is in a 24 by 56 foot space. I believe an average house is about 2000 square feet or more and my layout will occupy a space a bit over 500 to less than 800 square feet and will have rather wide aisles in the larger version and large radius curves. It will be built in a structure that will have a garage bay, my wife's pottery studio, and my train room.

I will also design and build the structure, I suspect that is no surprise to folks that have followed the club blog and discovered how much one to one scale building I have been involved in.

Sorry for the big yakfest when I get some more of the plan drawn up I will post a rather crude drawing of it. The room width will be 18 feet at the widest and could easily be shrunk to 15 and som things left out length seems to be going about 42 to 46 feet to be in the ideal range, seems like less than 1/2 of the average basement space.

Rob in Texas

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## Steel Mill

Thu, 2018-02-01 16:59 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

Rob, I wish you weren't so far away since I have a friend who kitbashed a Walthers blast furnace so it is more typical of a depression era furnace. It's really a signature scene on his layout. He models PRR in the depression era. You likely don't come to Michigan.

Robert

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## Google Maps

Thu, 2018-02-01 17:30 — mdvle

*Google has recently updated their maps and it is now a summer image but you can still make out the path in places. On the old winter maps it was a dark line paralleling the river*

If you use Google Earth you can actually choose to view prior satellite imagery (if any is available). From the Google Earth menu choose View, then select Historical Imagery.

In the case of your canal there is a bunch of past imagery between current and 1992.

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## Thanks!

Thu, 2018-02-01 18:27 — Wabash Banks

Thanks for that info mdvle! I am a fan of beating around on google maps looking for what was clearly there at one time but is now largely gone...

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## Alternatives to Google Maps

Thu, 2018-02-01 18:38 — mdvle

You can also check into aerial photos that various levels of government may have had done in that past.

For example, the Province of Ontario had at least the southern part of the province done in 1954, and the University of Toronto has made them available online: <https://mdl.library.utoronto.ca/collections/air-photos/1954-air-photos-southern-ontario/index>

Similarly Toronto has aerial maps of the city from 1947 to 1992 available on their website: <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accountability-operations-customer-service/access-city-information-or-records/city-of-toronto-archives/whats-online/maps/aerial-photographs/>

So it may be worth searching around your local city, state, university to see what is available.

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## HistoricAerials.com



Thu, 2018-02-01 19:12 — Lancaster

Check out HistoricAerials.com. They have photos back to the '50s in some cases. The quality is not up to today's standards and the coverage is not universal, but you may be able to see something helpful if your area happens to be covered.

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## Robert, if I ever get up that



Fri, 2018-02-02 00:42 — Virginian and L...

Robert, if I ever get up that way I will try and make contact before I travel. That is the only thing wrong with this place, I "meet" lots of great folks that I wish lived nearby as I am sure they would be great friends. And just think of all the great layouts we could visit and operate! I know there were kits for back dating the top works to an earlier time period and they do look very nice. Possibly you might be able to post some pictures of your friends mill!

Rob in Texas

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## Coal and Glass



Fri, 2018-02-02 09:22 — Eric H.



For a nice blend of through coal movements and local switching that includes a few glass factories, check out the 2001 Model Railroad Planning for an article titled "Serving West Virginia's Glass Industry". The layout plan fits into a medium size bedroom. It includes details on the B&O FM&P subdivision in Morgantown, WV, plus info on the Morgantown & Kingwood B&O branch that met the FM&P.

Eric

Eric Hansmann  
Murfreesboro, TN

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## Lee - Da funk...

Fri, 2018-02-02 11:15 — James Six

Ah Lee, . . . you're a kill-joy! LOL I miss the smell of coal smoke in the winter months. It permeated our entire town and most every town in the north. I miss the smell of coal smoke at the B&O roundhouse down the street from my boyhood home. I miss seeing whits sheets on the clothes line with gray soot on them from passing steam powered trains!!!



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## Odor of Coal Smoke



Fri, 2018-02-02 11:27 — JC Shall

One of the things that I absolutely love about being around hot steam locomotives is the smell of the coal smoke mixed with the steam and hot oil. And combine that with a whiff of creosote on a hot summer day and I wish I could bottle it for sale.



**-Jack**

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Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Jack - JC Shall's picture

Fri, 2018-02-02 11:31 — James Six

Oh my, . . . I think I just died and went to heaven. 😊



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## Eric, that article you

Fri, 2018-02-02 11:36 — Virginian and L...



Eric, that article you mentioned was one of my favorites. I thought it was very well done and was using it as a primer on the glass industry in my town incase I ended up including one of the industries on my layout. I really enjoyed the extra info you sent along about it and other things later when we began discussing Wheeling.

Rob in Texas

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## JC I am not sure your

Fri, 2018-02-02 13:08 — BOK

JC I am not sure your desires would probably would be as exciting if you had to spend time on a steam locomotive on a hot, humid, summer, day.

I spent many days as a road foreman, engineer pilot, on the Milwaukee 261 while it was on the Wisconsin Central Railroad. It's one thing to admire the locomotive, feel the heat, enjoy the odors of it while it is at rest and to enjoy it rushing past at speed (the reason we enjoy model steam locomotives). But, it is a completely, different experience to be aboard the cab of it for 12 hours to make sure it gets across the road. Whenever, I swung aboard this monster the only things I could think of was I sure hope there is a strong wind to keep us cool, lots of cold drinking water, not many hot cinders to go down my back and just how great it's going to be, to enjoy a cold shower in an air conditioned hotel room.

Steam engineers were thrilled to leave the dirty, hot in summer/freezing in winter temperatures, rough riding, super loud cab to instead enjoy a relatively, clean, cooler, smooth riding, much more quiet cab. This was also why crews showed up for work on a diesel in sports shirts and slacks rather than heavy overalls and long sleeved, clothes since they felt they were going to the "office" rather than a smokey, hell for their run.

Now, before folks respond with comments from old engineers who lament the passing of the steam locomotive and how it was "real" railroading, I remember to talking with many of these men, who also told me how wonderful it was to not have to work on on them anymore. I enjoy, seeing steam locomotives in controlled environments like operating railroad museums and operating on model railroads but probably, not so much in the cab.

I'll take a nice SW1500 with road trucks and air conditioning for my switching ... and I did as a short line engineer.

Barry

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## Barry - Hot Cab Time

Fri, 2018-02-02 14:38 — JC Shall



Barry, I don't disagree with what you've said about working steam. I've been fortunate to have scored cab rides in a half dozen or so steamers over the years, and everything you've said is true. And spending an hour or so in the cab is not the same as spending 12 hours on the monster. As far as I'm concerned, even diesels can be miserable when you're spending a significant part of your life on them

I went to work on the T&P railroad soon after my discharge from the Marine Corps. I worked the extra board the entire time and *never* got a day off (and this was when the hog law was 14 hours). It didn't take me long to decide to go back to school so as to find a career that allowed me to be home at night and on the weekends.

Enjoying railroads (including steam) as a hobby is *MUCH* more enjoyable than working for them. Having said that, I enjoyed being on and around the trains, even liked the smell of diesel exhaust! Just not enough to make it my lifelong career.

**-Jack**

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## Barry - About that Clothing



Fri, 2018-02-02 14:44 — JC Shall

*. . . crews showed up for work on a diesel in sports shirts and slacks . . .*

I had to laugh when I read this. I remember one hogger in particular who did just that. He was an elderly gentleman and would climb up on the engine like he was going to a social . . . even wore a tweed hat with a feather. When he entered the cab, the first order of business was to get out his rag and wipe down everything . . . controls, seat, even the armrest. Then he would take out his personal brake handle (chromed metal with a walnut handle) and place it on the stand.

He ran the train as smooth as silk, and I used to really like him.

**-Jack**

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## Hi Jack:It seems like you

Fri, 2018-02-02 16:33 — BOK

Hi Jack:

It seems like you had some good experience on the rails.

I too like steam engines especially my favorite #401 down at the Monticello, IL Railroad Museum. It's an ex Southern engine which has been completely re-built with a new boiler and being a 2-8-0 is just right for the museum's type of service. I've been a member there for over fifty years one time owning a couple of cabooses there and am amazed how a nice bunch of folks have a wonderful museum/operation with eight miles of track, a wye on each end and a connection with friendly, partner, NS. This what my "one town", HO railroad is based on with a couple of "twists and turns" to make it more enjoyable.

I enjoyed your comment about the guy wearing clean, sports clothes to run a diesel which reminds me of an IC, engineer I worked with on a main line local during hot summer months. At that time in the late 60s there was a notice put out to all crews that "the wearing of shorts while on duty was prohibited". To us brakeman/switchman this only made sense because of all the dirty, dangerous work we did...but not to one engineer who considered the notice a "challenge" to his comfort running hot GP9s. "Frenchy" as he was nick named would wear his overalls over his summer shorts when going on duty at Champaign but just as soon as we passed the passenger station/Division offices on our way out of town he peeled off the overalls so he could operate in comfort!

After fifty years of service I recently, retired and I too miss the smell of #2 fuel oil and particularly creosote on warm days. I like the odor of coal smoke but the museum fires their engine using waste oil so it doesn't have quite the same smell.

I look forward to seeing your layout plan. Mine should be up shortly.



Barry

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

- [Layout design](#)

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Here's my scale!

Sun, 2018-02-04 08:57 — James Six



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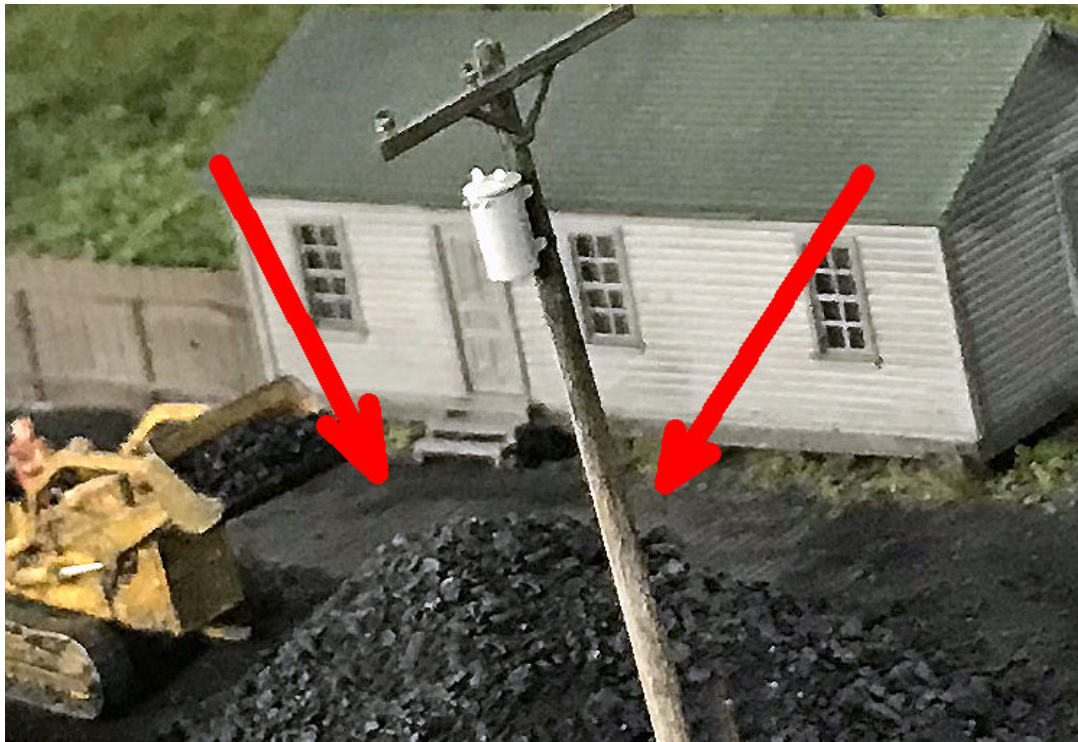
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## Worthington Indiana Schematic

Sun, 2018-02-04 11:16 — JackM

Earlier I posted a proposed track plan for a small town on the Pennsy Vincennes Secondary. I really did not like it that much and it did not get good reviews, too much real estate tied up in fiddle yards on either end.

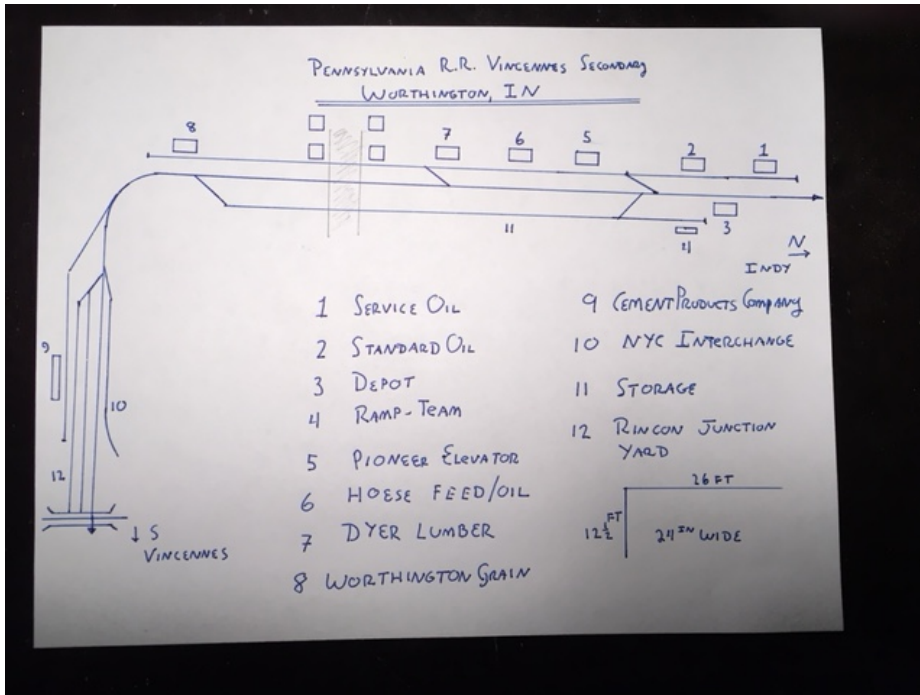
I went back to an earlier idea on a little bigger town of Worthington, IN. From the Pennsy CT1000 I got a list of the industries in town. Just south there was an interchange with the NYC and what looks like a small yard called Rincon Junction. Below is a proposed schematic. I don't have a track chart, but the industries are laid out in the correct order. I am working with a 26X12.5 I shape. There is no expansion possible except maybe a detachable extension to the right to give more lead for switching. I have a more detailed plan on graph paper that does not photograph well, but spacing looks good compared to the schematic.

Grain would probably move north towards Indianapolis. Lumber and sand coming in from the south, everything else in either direction. Empty coal hoppers moving south, coming back loaded moving north. I see operation with the local moving south right to left, switching all of the industries. Anything moving south would stay with the train, anything moving north would be left in the yard. I would then pull the southbound cars off the layout and turn the locomotive using a Peco Locomotive Lift. I would then place some cars behind the locomotive and mostly switch the yard for the train moving back north.

My goal was to entertain myself or maybe myself another for at most an hour, much as I do currently. What I like is scenery, buildings and building freight cars. I currently have about 35 boxcars, but about half are PS1's. So over the next couple of years I would replace them with earlier cars. My target date is around 1940, the economy would be improving and I have about ten AAR 37 cars, I would fill in with Accurail USRA outside braced and some 36 foot cars. I have two BWL H10's and three Walther's wood cabooses, good shape there. I would probably use Peco code 83 since I like the positive "click" that moves the points on the turnouts. My interests have been known to change, so I would like to complete this layout in five years, I would be 74.

What I don't like about this plan. Too much handling of equipment and no run through traffic like passenger trains behind 4-6-0's and long coal trains out of southern Indiana.

Any comments or helpful ideas. Thanks



Jack

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## It was so dirty I could not

Sun, 2018-02-04 11:35 — Virginian and L...

It was so dirty I could not tell that was what it was! 🍷

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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## Jack you might get some of

Sun, 2018-02-04 11:59 — Virginian and L...

Jack you might get some of the small passenger trains in to your layout but long through trains would be tough to do just because of space. If you are going to be limited for space one thing you typically need to give up are the long coal trains. I like them as well. Trying to fit them into your space is akin to putting 20lbs of stuff in a 5 lb sack.

With that said you still have lots of things you can do with this layout. You have several industries to work and two interchanges to get cars from. Since the war in Europe has been going on for a while in your era many of the commodities handled will be selling over seas.

One way around this issue involves a helix at each end of the layout. The layout would then need to be shaped like a dog bone as John Armstrong named it. Instead of the return loop a helix would be installed and through traffic could be stored under the layout in staging.



Kalmbach published some plans like this of fictional locations in the past that treated the center portion like a stage, and the rest of the place where the trains (actors) waited to come on to the stage. If that can be squeezed in you could get longer trains and have run through operations, if not you have what you have drawn as available space and it is what it is. It might not have everything but it looks like it would be enjoyable and a nice plan for the space available.

Rob in Texas

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

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

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## Worthington, IN

Sun, 2018-02-04 11:53 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

There is a 1951 topo map on Historic Aerials that shows the PRR and NYC splitting just NE of Worthington. There is also a 1946 aerial photo but it isn't very sharp. The topo map shows a double track mainline headed south or is one track PRR and the other NYC?

Robert

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## Rob - It was so dirty I could not

Sun, 2018-02-04 13:24 — James Six

Rob,

I just staged and took a photo for you and anyone else wondering about that coal yard scale.





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## Period Photos and Maps

Sun, 2018-02-04 14:12 — JWhite

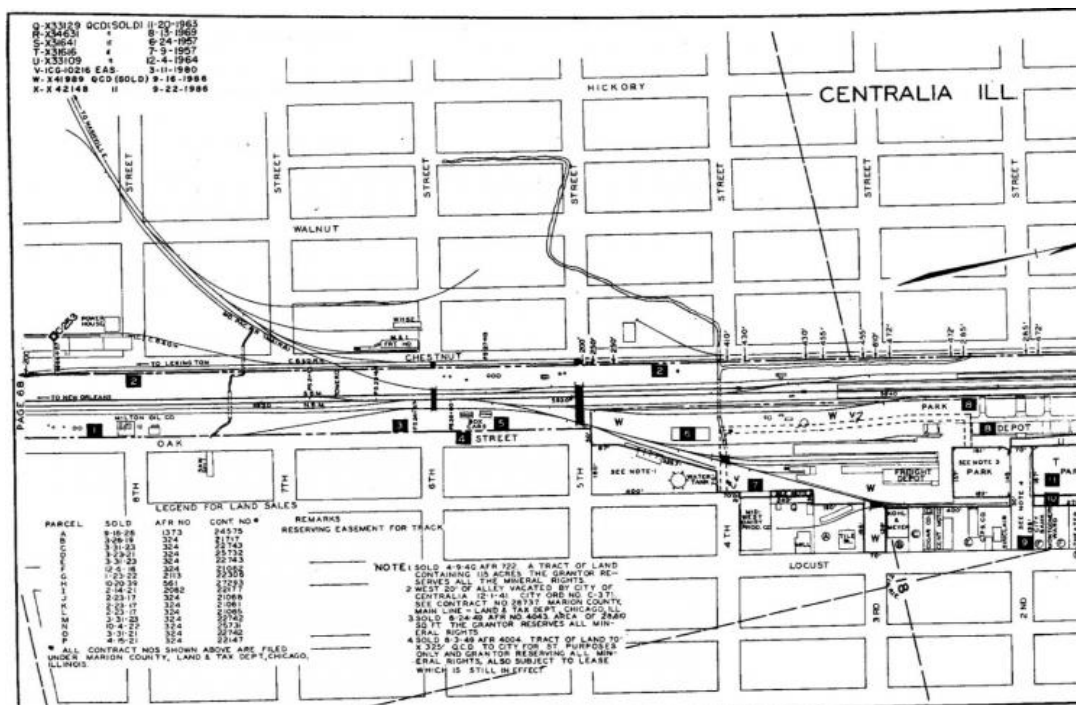
Here are some photos and maps I've collected while researching the area I am modeling.





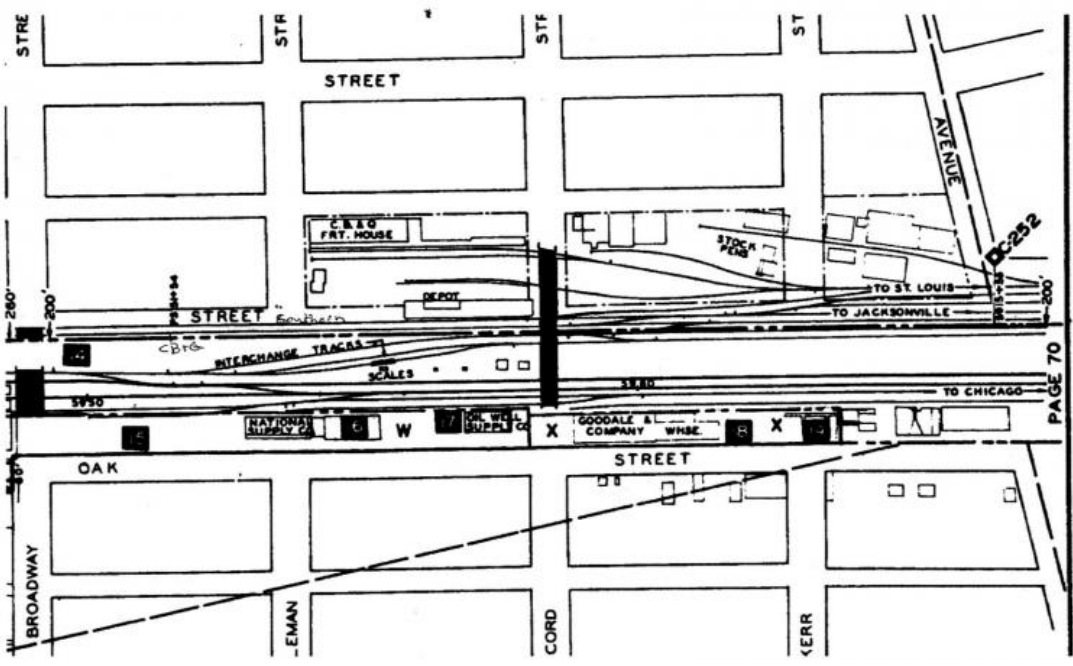
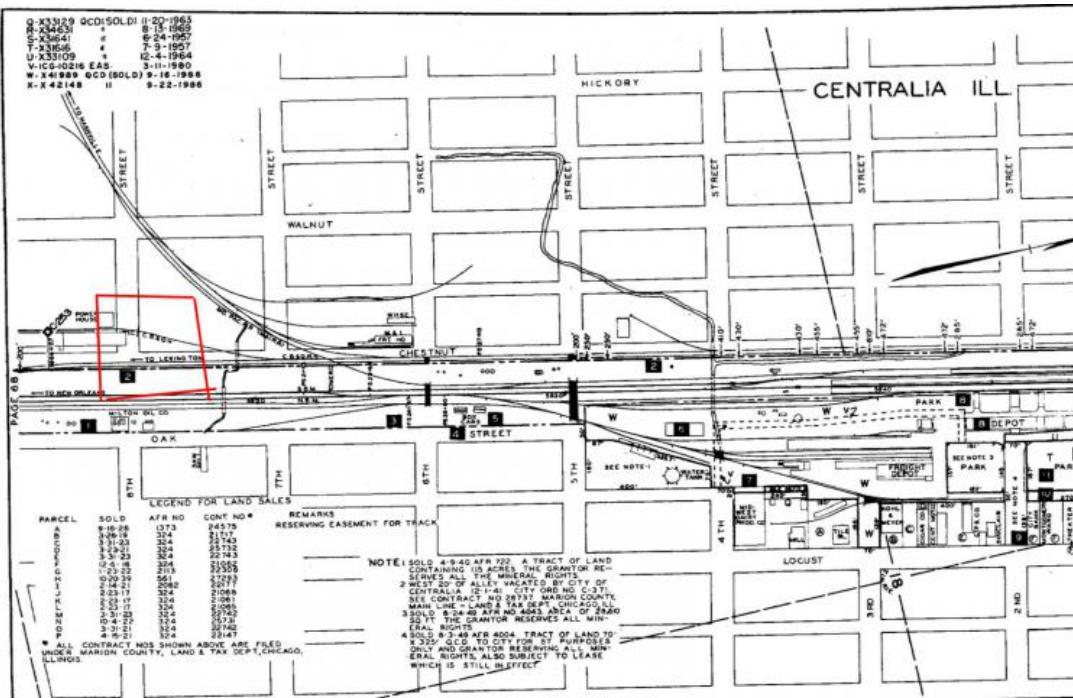


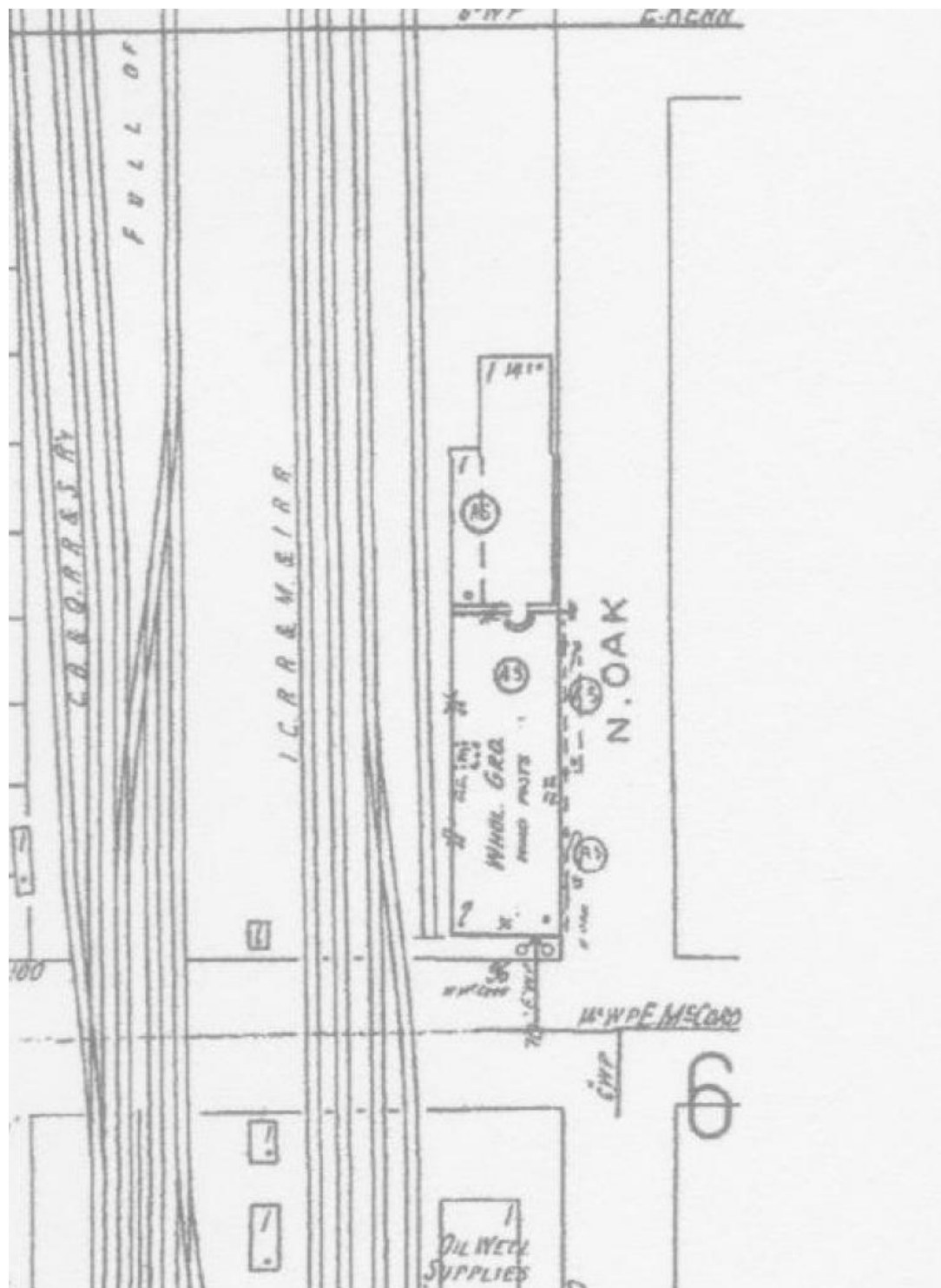
These are 1938 aerial survey photographs of the area I am modeling. I hope you can click on them and enlarge them from the forum.





Q-X3329 GCD(SOLD) 11-20-1965  
 R-X34231 8-15-1965  
 S-X3441 6-24-1967  
 T-X33646 7-9-1967  
 U-X33109 12-4-1964  
 V-X340216 EAS 3-11-1980  
 W-X41989 GCD(SOLD) 9-16-1988  
 X-X42148 9-22-1988







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Sun, 2018-02-04 14:53 — JWhite





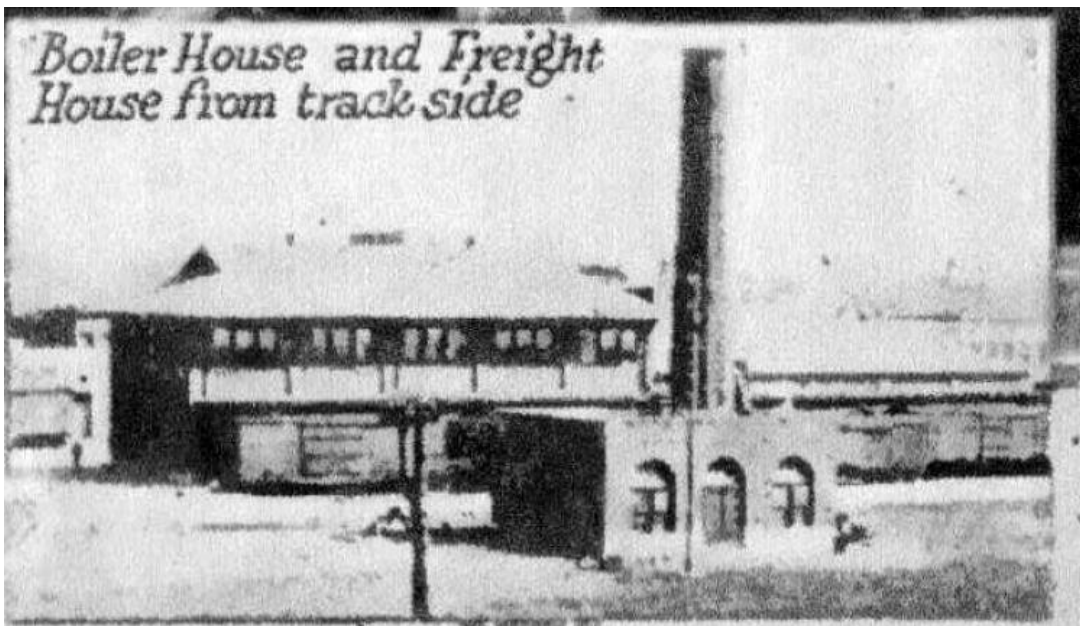














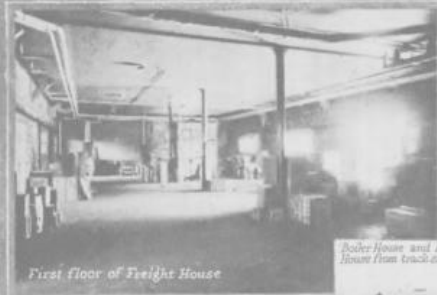


12236

3

Envelope Factory, Centralia, Ill.—3





First floor of Freight House



View of Waiting Room



Boiler House and Freight House from track side



Freight House, drive side, showing concrete paving



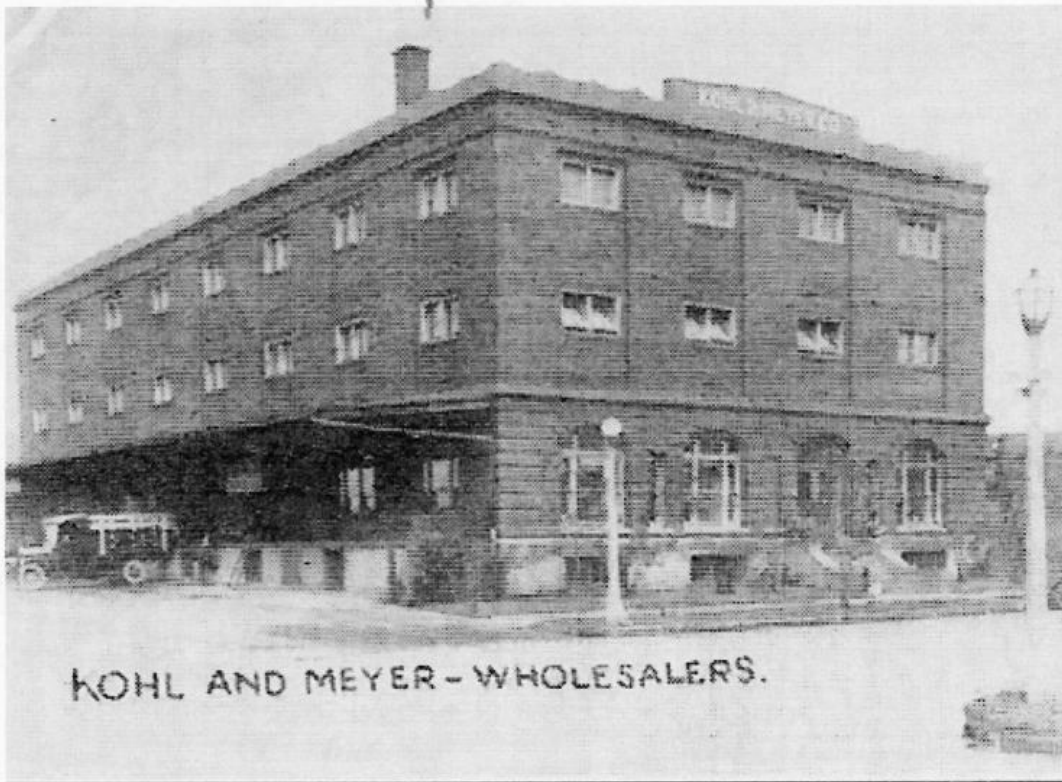
Passenger Station, showing tracks and platform



*Illinois Central R. R. Shops and Round House, Centralia, Ill.*



19054-N





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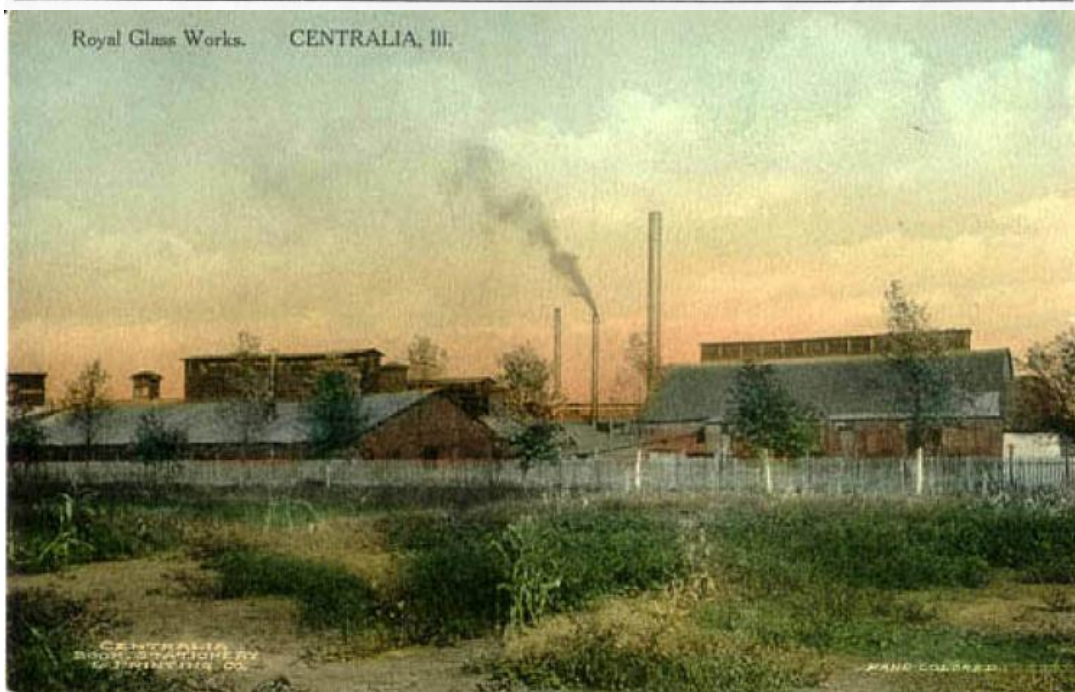
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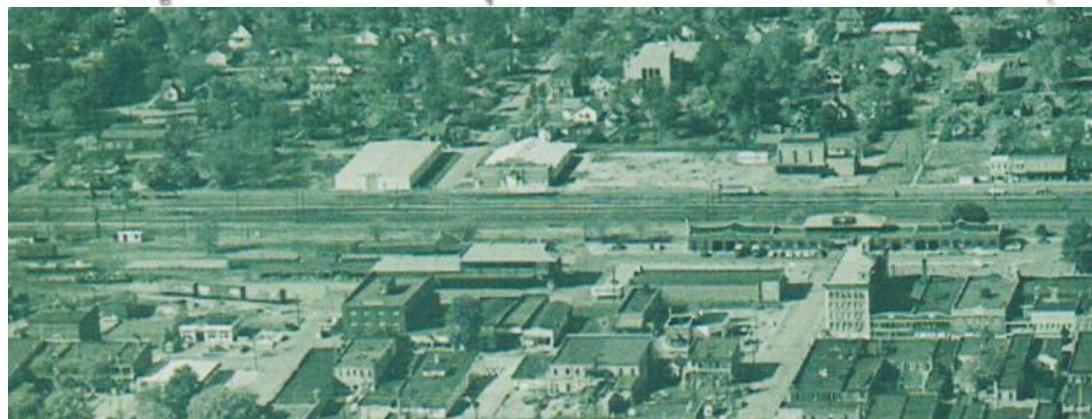
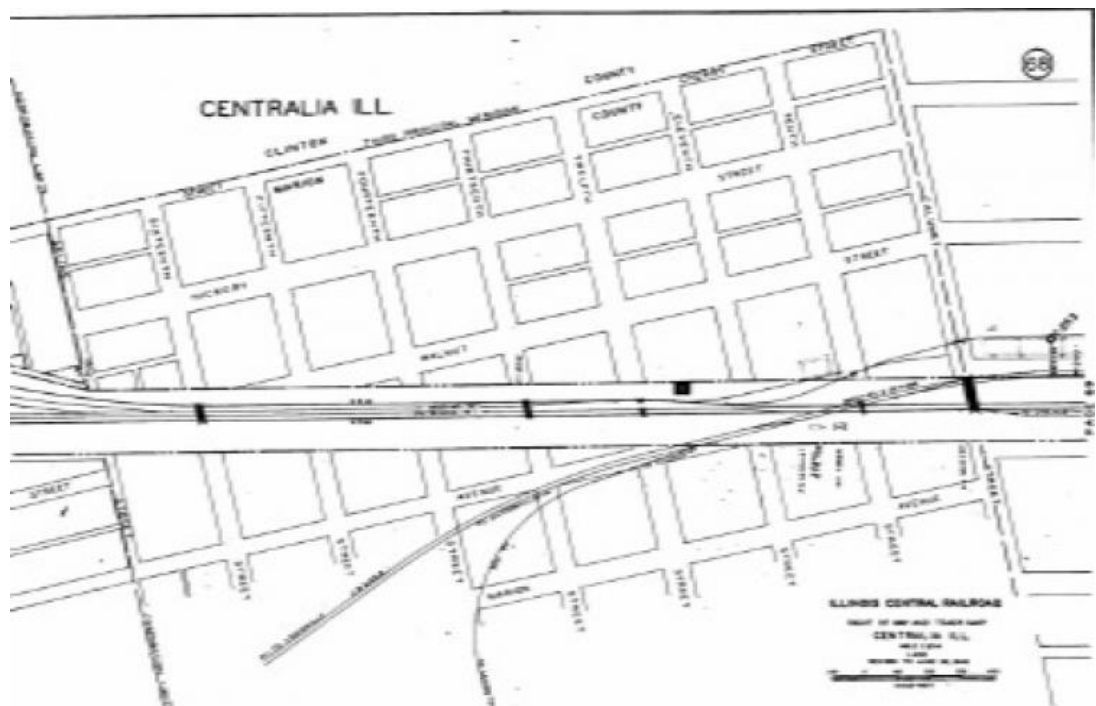
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## Ah, Centralia, yard on the IC

Sun, 2018-02-04 15:05 — BOK

Ah, Centralia, yard on the IC ... a place one, hot, summer night, in the late, 60s I managed to put two passenger diesels through a crossover lined against us. Fortunately, the locomotives did not derail, I did not lose my job as a new brakeman and in fact my engineer and I were not disciplined because we had no communication (radios) and I had never made this mile long backup move through multiple switches without a pilot conductor to guide me.

Yep, memories of riding IC passenger diesels (E units) on fast freights and dark nights of the 60s.

Barry

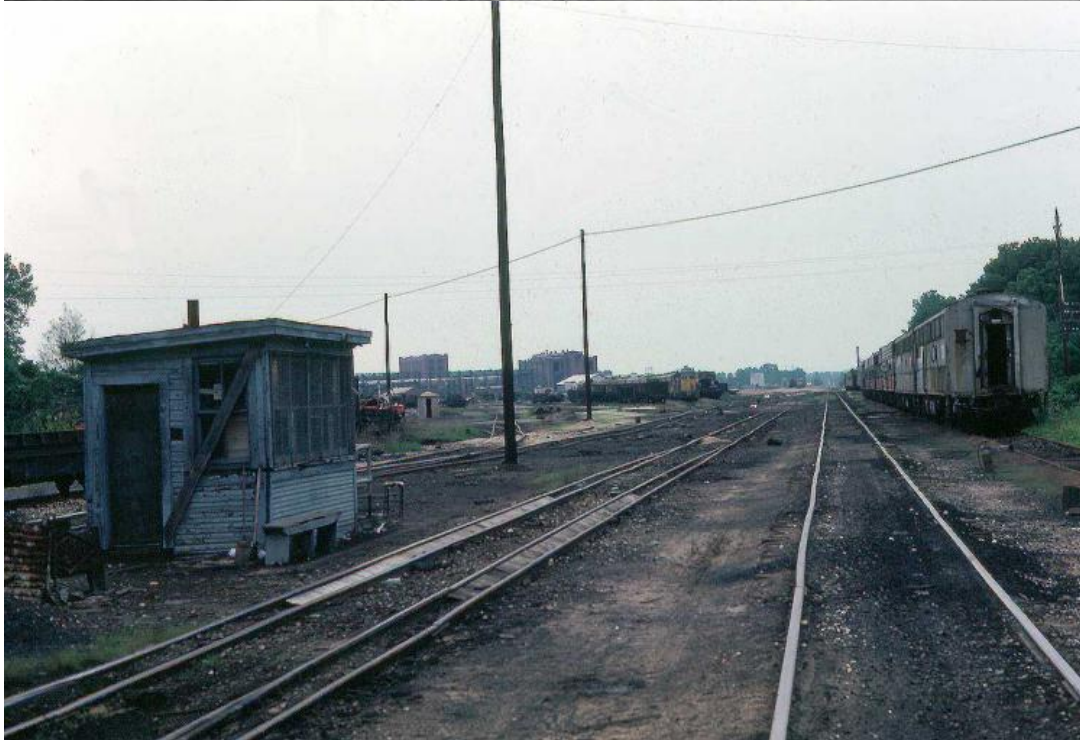
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## Hope this gives some

Sun, 2018-02-04 15:32 — JWhite



Smith Hay, Grain & Livery, Kinmundy



882. 25



9

882. 25





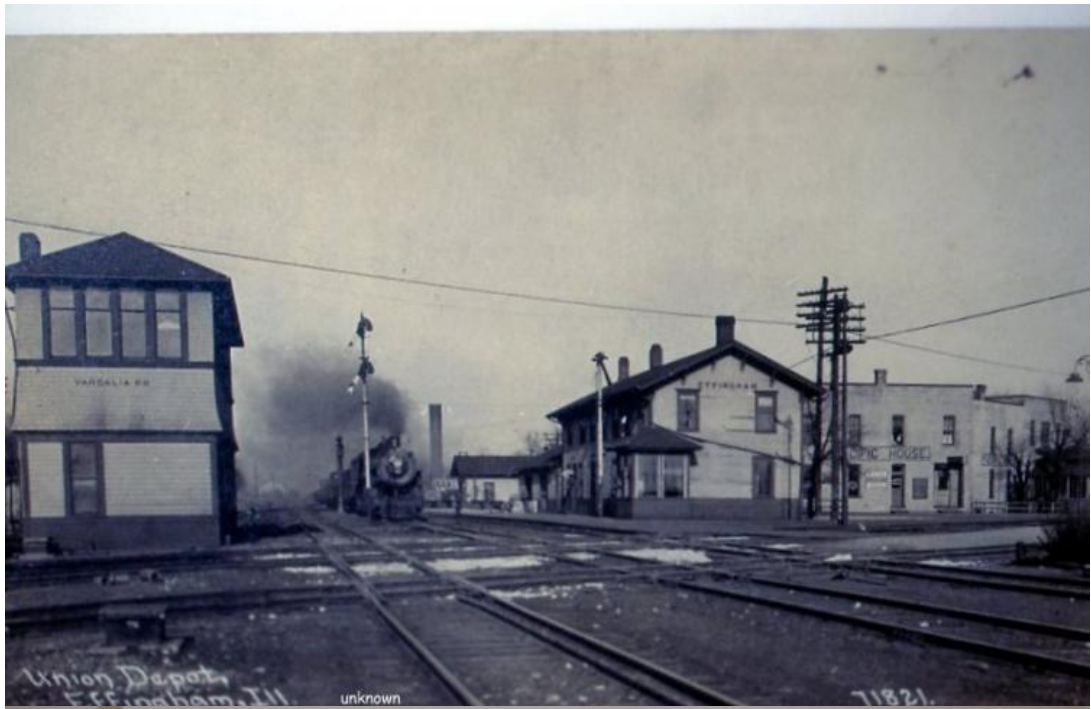
842 21

C. H. R. 97



9







Hope this gives some inspiration.

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concept and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Worthington IN

Sun, 2018-02-04 15:34 — Don Hanley

Jack

I think you have a good schematic going so far. One thing to consider is to have grain move both north and south. While the next town may be Vincennes, south of that is Evansville which is on the Ohio River. A lot of grain would head south via barge for export at New Orleans or another port near the mouth of the Mississippi River.

From what you have described is that you will have to set cars on and off the layout like I do. I would encourage you that if there is anyway possible to add off site staging do it, even if you have to add special extensions that connect to off layout via staging and can be removed between operating sessions. It is something that I wish I had.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## Good photos, JC. I always

Sun, 2018-02-04 16:26 — BOK

Good photos, JC.

I always wondered what was at Odin.

Barry

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## Barry, You would be shocked

Sun, 2018-02-04 17:28 — JWhite

Barry,

You would be shocked at what's no longer in Centralia. 3 stalls of the roundhouse are still there, the coaling tower is still standing and a few buildings that were part of the car shops.

That picture of the Odin Depot is undated but I'm guessing it was before 1920. I've got some photos of the last Depot but I need to scan them.

Jeff

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## One last look for the weekend

Sun, 2018-02-04 18:28 — James Six

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## Really Like This!

Sun, 2018-02-04 19:10 — Photo Bud

I've said it before, but say it again, this is a really great scene!

Thanks for sharing it with us!

Bud (aka John), The Old Curmudgeon

Fan of Northern Pacific and the Rock Island

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## Bud - I really like this

Sun, 2018-02-04 19:49 — James Six

I'll pay you later Bud! 😊



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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### "Just so you know, a one town

Tue, 2018-02-06 00:14 — ctxmf74

*"Just so you know, a one town layout is actually too large for my layout (80"x26")"*

Towns come in all sizes:>) A depot with passing siding and a freight house and team track spur could describe many small towns. You'd have to tack on temporary staging sections to the ends but you could run a couple of trains thru the town( or quite a few if you built it in N scale) .....DaveB



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## Jeff thanks for sharing those

Tue, 2018-02-06 09:29 — BOK

Jeff thanks for sharing those many photos of Centralia and other locations.

I don't recall the large interlocking tower but it was probably before the interlocking/diamonds with the IC, CB&Q and Southern were made an automatic interlocking or controlled by the IC dispatcher?

Yes, I know through the years most existing railroads have "modernized" by removing old buildings/facilities/trackage to lessen tax burdens and liability insurance issues...but they are missed just the same. The interesting thing is that many concrete structures like coal towers and steel water tanks lived on because it was too expensive to tear down!

You have done a great job preserving and finding excellent photos for modeling Centralia. One of those reminds exactly of my time spent working around Centralia on through freights from Champaign and being forced as youngest brakeman in seniority down there a few weeks at a time to cover the Centralia -Effingham/Champaign local.

Thanks, for sharing,

Barry

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## TOMA + one town

Tue, 2018-02-06 11:13 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

Quite by accident I discovered what may be the first TOMA, one town layout in the May 1972 RMC. Richard Francaviglia built a one town module with the town named "Iota." His HO module was 17" x 56" and the town had 4 structures including a depot and an elevator. There were 5 switches in all. I e-mailed Richard and he said he no longer has the module after over 40 years but is considering doing something similar in N scale.

We are both interested in Preston, MN on the MILW which would make a nice one town layout including a turntable and one stall enginehouse. In the 1950's mixed trains originated in Preston. Today the line is a bike trail so you can ride where the MILW "donkeys" (SW1's) roamed.

Robert

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## I have been busy cleaning up

Tue, 2018-02-06 12:20 — James Six

I have been busy cleaning up the scenes pictured below. I also printed a sheet of signs for this facility. It is STURGIS FEED MILL. I cut them out with scissors, then installed them to the buildings and the coal yard fence. This scene is nearing completion. More little details to add and some adjustment to the scenery. Also, I need to weather the center white building and install window glass. What say you brother model railroaders?









### Modeling 1925 thru 1935



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## Accolades to You

Tue, 2018-02-06 12:25 — JackM

Jim,

You have gotten plenty positive comments on the three blogs you have going. But honestly this looks just fantastic, makes me want to go the basement and start building. One question, the long warehouse, is that two Walther's kits sliced together?

Jack

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## Nice signs!

Tue, 2018-02-06 12:30 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

Where did the Commander coal originate? We now know the feed mill has Purina Chow. I'm waiting for Purina to make Geriatric Chow for us old folks. Add water and it makes its own gravy, Mmmm!

Robert

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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

### Progress photo

Wed, 2018-02-07 10:59 — James Six

This photo shows progress on this area of my one town - Sturgis MI. The furniture factory at the left is far from done as is the produce packing plant at the far right in the distance. The area between these facilities os coming together nicely. Keep in mind that this photo covers approximately 16 feet of layout shelf. To me, this is beginning to look like the 1925-1935 town that is is supposed to represent. I like it.

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- Union Pacific 4014 Google Tour Builder

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## Modeling 1925 thru 1935



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## Sturgis...

Wed, 2018-02-07 13:45 — Art Kuperstein

Jim,

Sturgis looks great and does represent a small town in the modeled era quite well. I just found photo this in an old tattered shoe box!!

Cheers,

Art Kuperstein

Langhorne, Pa.



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## Wow! James really nailed it, didn't he! (lol)

Wed, 2018-02-07 14:05 — Photo Bud

Nicely done!

Bud (aka John), The Old Curmudgeon

Fan of Northern Pacific and the Rock Island



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## Well I have a model of a one

Wed, 2018-02-07 19:20 — BOK

Well I have a model of a one town railroad which was built and designed for portability (it is hinged and folds up with the staging yard tucked underneath) to take to proto meets and teach modelers how to switch like the prototype.

Having retired as a railroader with many years of service I wanted this simple railroad to be realistic and based on the Illinois Central Railroad operating through, Monticello, IL in the 40/50s. This was not to be a switching puzzle like a time saver or ingenook but a real track layout that would cause a crew to think and ponder how they would arrive from staging, switch the industries as assigned turn the engine and head back to staging.

Looking at the attached photos it can readily be seen that this is not a super detailed railroad but it has a enough structures in the actual locations to be a bit better than place holders. While this is not part of my home railroad it served it's purpose well. and could easily be part of a railroad in a small space.

Enjoy the photos ... which may have been previously posted.

Barry





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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### @James Six - Google Earth Pro

Thu, 2018-02-08 15:16 — Photo Bud

<https://www.google.com/earth/download/gep/agree.html>

Google search finds this!

Bud (aka John), The Old Curmudgeon

Fan of Northern Pacific and the Rock Island

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- [The Santa Fe Chief at Carquinez Club](#)

## I am reassessing how I will

Fri, 2018-02-09 09:46 — James Six

I am reassessing how I will proceed in working on the layout. Here is a section of my track plan that is getting pretty far along toward completion. Below are three photos that show this area of the layout. My present plan is to totally complete this area of the layout before turning my attention to the other side of the layout that needs to be totally gutted and rebuilt.

My thought is that by completing this area of the layout I will have a "one town" layout that can be operated for fun to be had by all. After this I can turn attention to the major work remaining on the other side of the layout. Sturgis will be represented by both sides. But, while working on the other side along with my friends I can operate this side.

What to you think?



The furniture factory in this photo has a fair amount of work to take it to completion. This photo is a few months old.



In the next photo (taken two days ago) you can see progress has been made to the factory and the other buildings. For sure, I have added signs to the buildings and installed some of the electrical utility equipment. The coal shed and coal unloading area have been added to the far end of the factory at its boiler house.

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In this last photo you see the area beyond the concrete grain elevator shown in the above two photos.



Once this area is finished including cleaning up and re-working the electrical busses and feeders, I can operate this side of the layout. This will happen by time summer arrives. At that point operations can resume. Again, your thoughts?



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## Re:I am reassessing how I will

Fri, 2018-02-09 09:59 — donm

Track plan does not show a runaround. Although the industry spurs all face the same direction, a 2nd engine would be required to get cars from the yard to those spurs.

Don Mitchell



[See the SMR blog](#)

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## Don - I am reassessing how I will

Fri, 2018-02-09 10:05 — James Six

There is a runaround in the small yard that is out of sight to the left. All of these sidings open to the same direction. They all connect to the railroad near the yard except for the produce packing plant at the far end of the view. Double-ended sidings were a small minority of customer sidings making switching a pain in the a\$\$ at times. To me, this makes operation more realistic and more fun (challenging!). Just my thoughts.

Note we have operated this side of the layout for more than five years now and everyone has really liked it.



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## Besides the Track Plan

Fri, 2018-02-09 11:19 — jonathan jones

Hi, Jim.

The layout is really looking good. And it's nice to have something mostly finished and fully operating.

Two questions: What are you planning to do about lighting? Are you thinking of installing a valance of some sort? This would frame the scene and really focus one's view on the trains.

If this has already been discussed on this thread, let me know. I've looked through but I haven't seen any talk about these important items to consider.

Jonathan Jones

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## Jonathan - Besides the Track Plan

Fri, 2018-02-09 13:53 — James Six

Hi Jonathan,

I am not sure what I will do with the room lighting. For me, most layout rooms are too dark. This does not lend itself to photography. All of my photos are taken with ambient room lighting. I have a large number of those little curly-Q CF lights in the ceiling at present. However, they are not pretty, so I will probably replace them sometime down the road. I just do not know what I will use for lighting . . . yet.



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## Besides the Track Plan

Fri, 2018-02-09 15:04 — jonathan jones

Jim,

LED strip lights have worked well for me and are well suited to a shelf-style layout. They seem to work best in conjunction with a valance and a "ceiling" of sorts about 18 to 24 inches above the layout. This combination lights and frames the layout in a very effective way. One other key is to try and set things up so that from normal viewing distance, you can't see the top edge of the backdrop. I think this really allows the backdrop to perform in the best way and keeps the viewer focused on the layout.

Are you thinking of putting in a valance?

Jonathan

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## Jonathan - Besides the Track Plan

Fri, 2018-02-09 16:17 — James Six

My ceiling above the layout is somewhat low on this side of the room. There are central air metal ducts directly above the layout shelf. I am limited in what I can do. But, . . . I am definitely considering a valance. In fact, it is my first choice.



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## Jonathan - Besides the Track Plan

Fri, 2018-02-09 16:41 — James Six

Jonathan, I just Photoshopped in a valance to see what it may look like. I like it. So, now I will need to figure out how to do it and what materials and lights to use. See what you just caused?! LOL What do y'all think?



CLICK ON PICTURE TO ENLARGE



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## Even if it is photo shopped

Fri, 2018-02-09 17:16 — BOK

Even if it is photo shopped it looks like museum, quality to me.

That's going to be one great layout, Jim.

Barry

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Thanks Barry

Fri, 2018-02-09 17:37 — James Six

I am convinced. There will be a valance with LED strip lighting. You guys have me convinced.

Much appreciated,



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## Valence with LED

Fri, 2018-02-09 17:57 — Jeff Whitney



**JEFF WHITNEY....apprentice to this thing we crazies call weathering!**

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## Valence

Fri, 2018-02-09 18:00 — Art Kuperstein

Jim,

Looks very appealing and finishes the look. But remember, you can't bump your head into it, if the valence is just Photoshopped! 😊

Cheers,

Art

Art Kuperstein

MPRRHS Editor - TIMETABLE quarterly

M&PRR c.1949

Langhorne, Pa

Ma & Pa RR Website-

<http://maparr.weebly.com>

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Hi Jeff, What did you use for

Hi Jeff,

What did you use for lighting behind the valence. Looks good to me. did you use?



Is it LED strip lighting? IF so, what type

Thanks for sharing,



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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

**Jack**



Sat, 2018-02-10 15:11 — Jeff Whitney

Jack; the power supply is much like that of say your laptop, pretty much just plug and play. One can also shorten the lengths with a pair of side cutters and I also believe they can be added to, there are also splitters available. Just go to the bay and type in super bright LEDs, all sorts of goodies will pop up. The circle on the left plugs into the LED strip and the

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circle on the right is the power supply.



**JEFF WHITNEY....apprentice to this thing we crazies call weathering!**

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## James



Sat, 2018-02-10 15:19 — Jeff Whitney

James; you are far too kind sir. Thank you for such accolades! Might I also reciprocate with your layout looks very stunning, something to strive for.

**JEFF WHITNEY....apprentice to this thing we crazies call weathering!**

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## LED



Sun, 2018-02-11 07:13 — sailormatlac

Jim, I did something similar than Jeff last year for a module. The LED were glued on an angled piece of wood to take care of the shadows on car sides. Worked very well. I must confess I also located the track once I new what was the best spot to minimize unsightly shadow.

More details on my blog:

<http://theendofsteel.blogspot.ca/2017/06/light-structure.html>

Good luck!

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>

Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>

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Scale Firecracker  
4th of July, 2017  
Operating Session

- The Santa Fe Chief at Carquinez Club
- Siskiyou Line dismantling underway again
- Whoa !!! It's sort of starting to look like something.
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## Valance and LED's

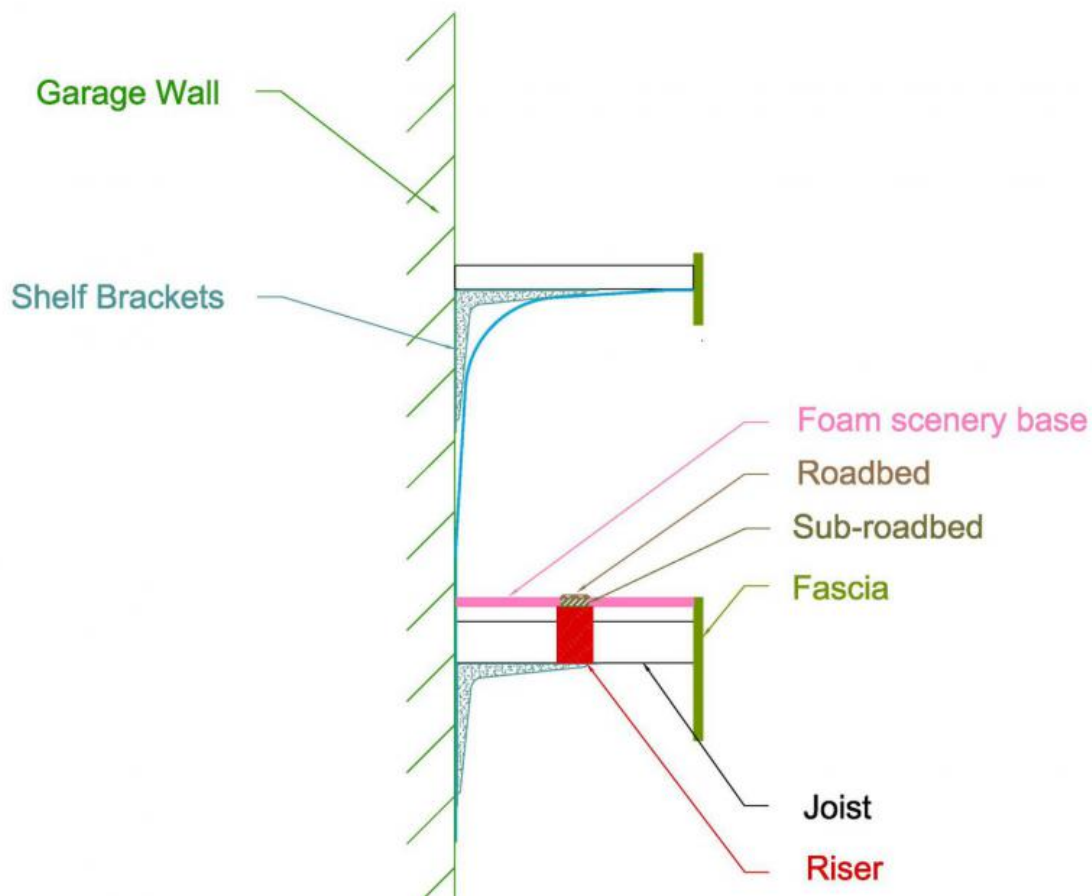


Sun, 2018-02-11 08:51 — Don Hanley

I don't recall that I have ever seen anything written about the opening height between the edge of the layout. My layout height is 54" or 4-1/2' I set the distance between the edge of the layout and the valance at 16". I have found that the distance works well since my layout is only 22" wide.

I have plenty of room to get my head in there and work. If the layout were deeper I would make the opening wider. I have one in the corner where the depth from the fascia to the back is around 34". The 16" opening is a little tight since I have to get more of my body into the opening to reach the furthest distances to work on scenery. No track back there.

Here is a cross section of my layout



The brackets are spaced every 16" on center at stud location. The LED lighting I use is located at the front behind the valance so you don't see them.

As far as choosing LEDs the higher the the temperature in Kelvin the bluer the color is. 5000K is close to the typical florescent lights that have been used for years by modelers. The actual perceived color of the sun changes through the day based on the earth's atmosphere.

#### Colour Temperatures in the Kelvin Scale

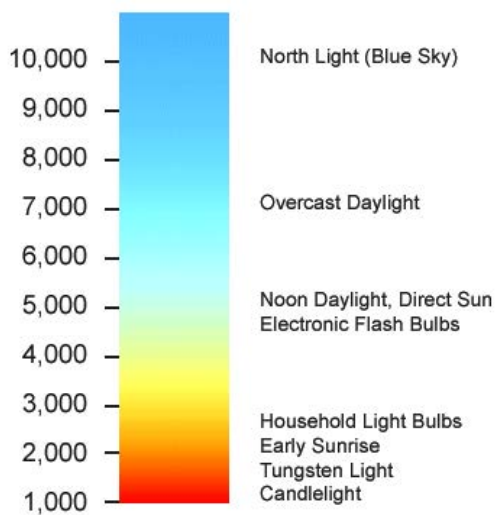


Image courtesy of [www.mediacollege.com](http://www.mediacollege.com)

I personally like the color of my layout lighting in the 3700K - 4000K range which is a slightly on the yellow side. I think that it makes the models look better.

My 2 cents on the subject.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



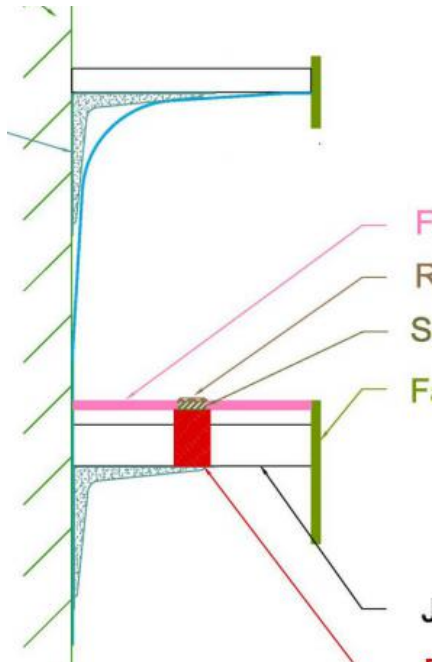
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## Don, As always you provide

Sun, 2018-02-11 14:14 — James Six

Don,

As always you provide useful and interesting information. Looking at your cross-section diagram I see one thing that concerns me. Continued below image.



Your valance and the fascia are lined up. I am afraid that if you have valance lighting that the faces of trains, buildings and other things on the layout will have shadows on the faces toward the aisle. Because of this I plan to have my valance farther out over the aisle. In doing so the models should be front lighted and not in shadows. What do you think?



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## Valance and LED's



*Your valence and the fascia are lined up. I am afraid that if you have valence lighting that the faces of trains, buildings and other things on the layout will have shadows on the faces toward the aisle. Because of this I plan to have my valence farther out over the aisle. In doing so the models should be front lighted and not in shadows. What do you think?*

Jim, In some places your track is fairly close to the front of your layout, so I'd agree, you may want to offset your valence. Looking at Don's example, his track is centered on the foam scenery base, so his models will probably not be in the shadow.

Cheers,

Rich S.

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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Valance and LEDs

Mon, 2018-02-12 07:13 — jonathan jones

One other observation: Ideally you want the "ceiling" above the layout shelf to be flat and unobstructed. This makes it easy to add the LED strip lighting, but you can also continue the sky color onto the ceiling and have a relatively unobstructed surface, which is nice.

One way to achieve this is to turn the shelf brackets upside down like an L, so the vertical legs are pointing up, and mount your "ceiling" to the horizontal leg. That way, the vertical leg doesn't have to be hidden, which can cause a lot of extra construction. This works fine as long as the ceiling material is not heavy or doesn't have a lot of weight put on it.

Jonathan Jones

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### A couple of small town possibilities

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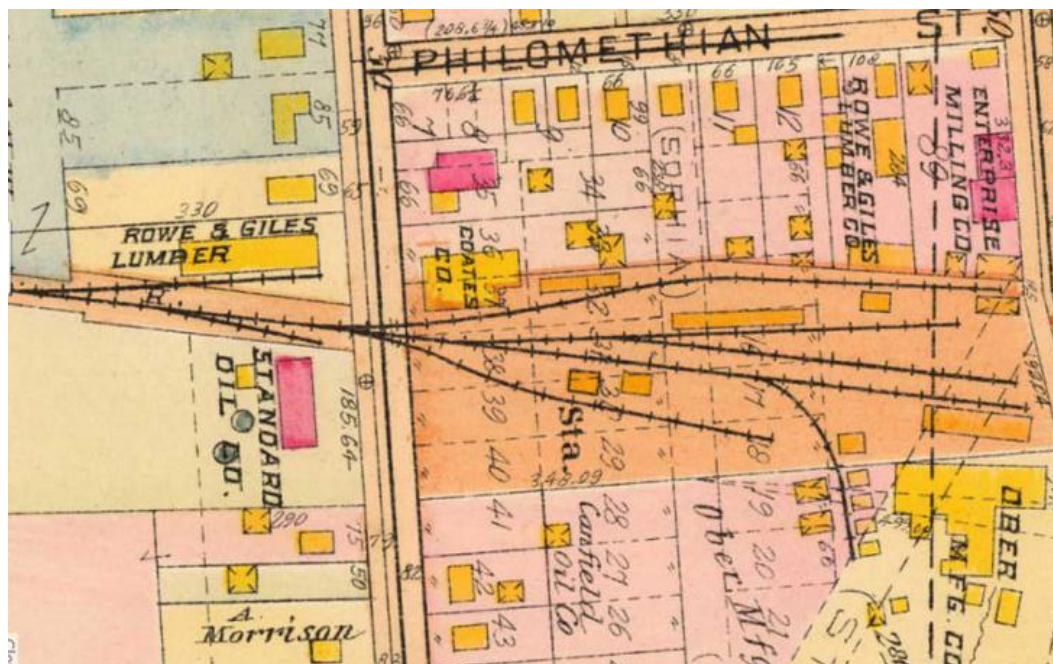
Mon, 2018-02-12 08:23 — Eric H.

I've presented a number of clinics at RPM meets that focus on smaller layouts. At the RPM Chicagoland meet in October, the presentation was "Prototype Modeling - Manageable Layout Size". Resources were summarized and a number of prototype locations were shared. Click on any image here to review a slightly larger size.



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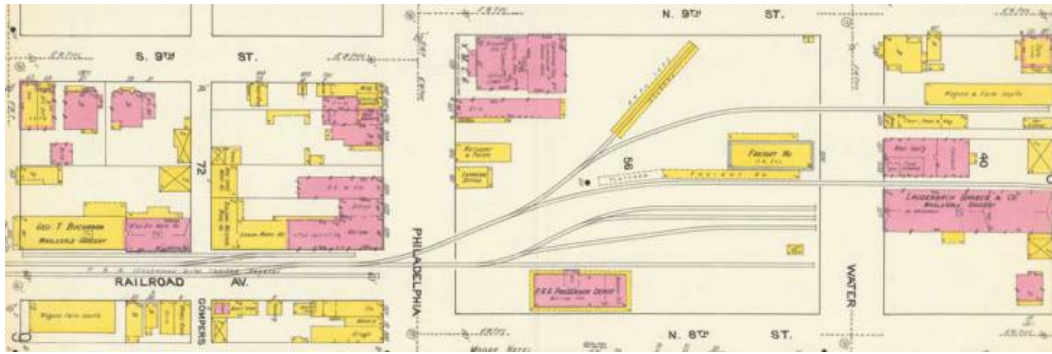


Here's the Wheeling & Lake Erie Chagrin Falls branch terminal. This is a portion of a plat map produced by the GM Hopkins company. Many cities were documented with these type of maps that were produced at various intervals in the late 1800s and through to the mid-1900s. I find they illustrate a bit more detail than Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. And your eyes aren't playing tricks on you. This terminal did not have a runaround. Cars were pushed along the seven mile branch form Solon to Chagrin Falls.



This is the corresponding image that helps bring perspective to the map. This image was marked as Unknown in the W&LE Collection at the Cleveland State University Library. The terminal is basically a yard as a small specialty paper mill was a few blocks away and served by wagon and truck.

FYI, this branch was originally built by a narrow gauge predecessor to the Wheeling. In 1949, the NKP took over the W&LE and operated this until 1964, when the N&W took over the NKP. I believe NS served the line for a few years.



The [Penn State University Library](#) has digital versions of Sanborn Fire Insurance maps for many Pennsylvania towns ready to browse. The Pennsy had a lonely branch that connected Blairsville and Indiana, PA. Above you see the terminus in downtown Indiana, my hometown. The map dates to June 1916 and is the latest version available on the site.

These small terminals were the UPS and FedEx hubs of the steam era. Off to the left several blocks was another customer that received coal hoppers. The power plant that supplied steam heat and electricity for the Indiana Normal School campus operated into the 1960s, along with this small terminal.

Both of these examples can be configured into a spare room layout or something against two walls of a larger room. Add a small staging yard off to the left for either town to maximize operation. Truly though, just a single tail track will do fine as staging.

I'll present this clinic again at [RPM Valley Forge](#), March 23-25, 2018. I hope to see a few MRH readers at the event!

Eric

Eric Hansmann  
Murfreesboro, TN

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## Chagrin Falls

Mon, 2018-02-12 09:42 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

Eric, if I recall correctly the river above the falls prevented any extension further north on the Chagrin Falls Branch. I seem to recall seeing a more modern track diagram and there was a short runaround a few blocks south at another industry but that may not have been there in your era. I believe it was on the Rails to Trails site which has a number of W&LE track diagrams.

Robert

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## More Chagrin Falls

Mon, 2018-02-12 10:02 — Eric H.

Robert,

I think the terrain just beyond the yard was also a factor. It drops off to the river in just a few blocks. There was some grading on the other side of the river in anticipation of narrow gauge progress but the Chagrin River was not crossed by the railroad near the paper mill.

I've reviewed [the Rails and Trails maps](#) and did not see a passing siding along the seven miles from Solon. I used to live a mile out of Chagrin Falls and road my bicycle on the old right of way from the town down to the river crossing a couple miles towards Solon. I don't recall any graded spots wide enough for two tracks.

Eric



Eric Hansmann  
Murfreesboro, TN

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## Hi Robert: There was an

Mon, 2018-02-12 10:04 — BOK

Hi Robert:

There was an interesting, article in Classic Trains magazine a few years ago which detailed operation of this branch by a retired engineer who worked the job along with a map and pix. He definitely, explained how there being no, runaround track at the end of the branch they had to use gravity from one of the spurs to get cars around the engine in order to switch the industries and then operate the engine, tender leading, going home until they reached a wye a little ways down the line where they could turn the engine for the remainder of the trip.

Because many of these industries were "playing out" by the time diesels arrived it's doubtful they ever built a run around track at the end of the line.

We railroaders always learned how to get a job done when we didn't have what we needed...in this case a runaround track.

Barry

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## Rolling cars by

Mon, 2018-02-12 14:00 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

One day listening to my scanner the local crew on the WATCO shortline here in town found a place where the cars would roll by even though the grade wasn't obvious. The discovery resulted in considerable rejoicing between the conductor and engineer. There was a runaround but rolling a few cars by the engine was certainly quicker. They did have one industry that did not have runaround so rolling the cars by was the only way it could be switched but it was an obvious grade. We can't do it in HO.

Robert

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## Robert, I am guessing that

Mon, 2018-02-12 15:52 — BOK

Robert, I am guessing that railroad is the Grand Elk up in Michigan? They're a good outfit and if there is an easier way of doing things ...railroaders will find it.

I once was an engineer on a short line where my conductor didn't have the same, level of experience as me. He would come up with the strangest, switching moves ...many, not too good or safe.and often without telling me, his engineer what we were doing so we could both be on the "same page" so to speak. As engineer it's my responsibility to make the engine start, stop, go forward, backup and at what speed in response to the conductor's instructions...the switching is up to the conductor. It is also my responsibility to constantly, know where my conductor is in relation to the engine and cars being moved. Most crews talk over what needs to be done and agree on the best moves to be made because in the end ...it is both our responsibilities to make sure things are done safely and in compliance with the rules. This is why, when my conductor would start a strange move he had thought up and things started to go wrong ( cars rolling out of a track/handbrakes not applied allowing cars to roll away/etc.) he would expect me to speed up too fast to get the engine out of the way and avoid a side swipe or other damage.

Yes, it is great when a crew finds an easier, quicker way to perform switching as long as it's safe and everyone is on the same page. This is also why I prefer to operate small, scale, railroads with two man crews rather than just one person so that it is more fun and each crew member has a job to do.

Barry

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## No runaround

Mon, 2018-02-12 21:15 — sailormatlac

Barry,

*"We railroaders always learned how to get a job done when we didn't have what we needed...in this case a runaround track."*

Exactly. Model railroaders have a knack for making a situation more complex than it requires to be. Old maps are full of simplistic yet hard to "decipher" track plans that makes sense from a railroader perspective. I recall a discussion with a friend who's a professional railroader about adding a storage track to make operations easier and more "prototypical". His answer was a flat no et he demonstrated me why is was absolutely useless and a waste of time and money. He had a point and from a railroad perspective, the road would have saved money keeping things as they were.

In fact, **I would love if magazines would make videos and articles about explaining real life basic locations and how they were worked.** That would be so much more useful to design layout than a list of "what to do and what not to do". The real world was full of runarounds and wyes clogged with industry spots or extremely spartan yet busy terminal like the Chagrin Falls example.

Matt

Proudly modelling Quebec Railway Light & Power Company since 1997.

Hedley-Junction Club Layout: <http://www.hedley-junction.blogspot.com/>

Erie 149th Street Harlem Station: <http://www.harlem-station.blogspot.com/>

Quebec South Shore Railway <http://www.theendofsteel.blogspot.com/>

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## Gravity shunting roll by - Oh YES you can...

Tue, 2018-02-13 06:44 — Oztrainz

Hi Robert and all

*We can't do it in HO*

Most HO wagons running on needelpoint bearings will roll on about a 1% grade very well. All you need is an uncoupler on the main line and 2 servos. The servos lift a pin camouflaged in the ballast that engages with the axles on the wagons. One servo on the main line to hold the wagon once it is uncoupled while the loco gets out of the way and a second servo in the siding to stop the inbound wagon after it rolls into the siding when the pin on the first servo is retracted..

There have been several posts on here about how to hold parked wagons on grades that have included some other tricks like using weeds between the rails to act as retarders, etc

And when the grade is the wrong way, there is always cable shunting to tow wagons into a siding with a rising grade. That could also easily be done in HO. Or gravity shunt the siding when heading back the other way.

Regards,

John Garaty

Unanderra in oz

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## I read nothing out of line in

Wed, 2018-02-14 08:26 — James Six

I read nothing out of line in my blog/topics, but there were a few recent messages that got close. I ask that there be no discussion of politics of any kind. If this becomes an issue I will pull the plug on my blog/topics and go elsewhere. I do not care whether you are liberal or conservative or who you voted for, and I do not want to read about it either.

Thank you all.



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Yes.....This a MRR hobby website!

Wed, 2018-02-14 11:51 — kansaspacific1

Agree totally. And as I just mentioned in your Sturgis blog site...These hobby conversations on your three posts are great. Hope everyone can stick to the subject at hand. Thanks to all who have and will continue!

Chuck

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### Not even presidential trains????

Wed, 2018-02-14 15:26 — Logger01

,,, I do not want to read about it either.

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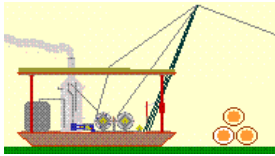
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Between 1920 and 1935 Presidents Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, Roosevelt and most of their opponents had Whistle Stop trains that can be fun to have pop up in any little (or big) town. Definitely an operational feature of the depression era. 😊

**Ken K**



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## Indiana, PA Sanborn Map

Wed, 2018-02-14 20:07 — JackM

Eric thanks for posting the maps for the pocket sized yards. I have been struggling trying to fit a manageable layout into my space. The yard at Indiana, PA could work. Reading the small print on the Sanborn map, the industries are not that interesting, so I would change to a good mix as sources of traffic. But, what I like is the switchback switching on the industries to the left and a little street running. If you look at the Sanborn maps to the south of this one you can find the other end of the run around. The B&O also had a branch that entered from the south, I don't know if they interchanged since the maps don't go that far south. The Pennsy CT1000 has the little yard at mile post 18.9. A wye track is listed to the south at MP 17.9, so that would be how they turned the locomotive.

Get out the "high tech" pencil and graph paper and start doodling this might work. Eric, do you have any more information.

Jack

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## Sanborn maps and other maps.

Thu, 2018-02-15 09:29 — James Six

One thing that quickly becomes apparent when studying Sanborn maps and other old railroad maps is that there were a lot more on-line customers to switch before WWII than post 1960. The between years were a transition from plentiful to not plentiful industries to switch. This is not a problem for model railroaders who prefer to run over the road inter-city trains. But for those of us who like to switch industries (small, medium, or large) you cannot find a better time to model than pre WWII.



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## Switching Layouts.

Thu, 2018-02-15 14:37 — Rich\_S



*But for those of us who like to switch industries (small, medium, or large) you cannot find a better time to model than pre WWII.*

Unless you prefer second generation diesels. That is why I went the proto-freelanced route. There are several prototype railroads I follow, but the branch line is completely imaginary so I could have numerous online industries in my town. That is also the reason why I've never been able to choose one prototype, my fascination is with all second generation locomotives and not one specific prototype railroad.

Cheers,

Rich S.

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## Jim, the time periods you



Thu, 2018-02-15 16:51 — Virginian and L...

Jim, the time periods you mention have a lot to offer. The one town concept has even more. In some respects one could even do part of a town or city. Think of one of the larger cities like New York, Chicago, St Louis or Pittsburgh. One could model a mile of a switching district in one of those places or even less and have a great many industries to switch even in more modern time periods. It might require lots more looking in the modern era than the first part of the twentieth century however I suspect that there are still industries to be found. Think of part of a belt line railroad or a terminal railway. That could be something that allows an individual that can't decide which railroad to model to model bits of several.

If one stays in your time period pre 1960 almost anyplace would do well. I suspect if one does not go too far past the 1980s there would still be many places that could qualify for those folks stuck in a more modern era.

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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## Sanborn

Fri, 2018-02-16 07:33 — Douglas Meyer

There are two problems with Sanborn maps. First off is getting your hands on them. Some times that is easy and sometimes not so much. The other issue is that they don't cover everywhere.

I model the C&O in the New River Gorge between Hawks Nest and Hinton West Virginia. And as far as I know there are no Sanborn maps.

I believe that they were created for insurance reasons.

But something else that are available for some railroads is basically a tax evaluation map. At some point (I think about 1916 or so) the US government decided that Railroads needed better documentation about the physical plant of the railroad as it was used for tax purposes. So railroads had to document there track, structures and what have you. Some railroads such as the C&O kept these drawings updated for decades as they were useful to the railroad. So this is perhaps another source of information.

-Doug Meyer

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## Rich S

Fri, 2018-02-16 09:20 — James Six

Hi Rich,

I understand what you are saying. I too like 2nd gen diesels. Love them in fact. However, the time of 2nd gen diesels does not have any way near the on-line customers to switch that preWWII does. That said, one can certainly freelance a branchline and do it the way you want it to be. I can't do that because not matter what is made up in teh late 1960s and 1970s, realistically, there were not the customers to switch. Key word is "realistically". I am too hung up on realism not just of my models but of the setting that I am modeling. I am the oddball. Not you.



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## Rail Force One...

Fri, 2018-02-16 09:25 — p51



*Between 1920 and 1935 Presidents Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, Roosevelt and most of their opponents had Whistle Stop trains that can be fun to have pop up in any little (or big) town. Definitely an operational feature of the depression era. 😈*

That's a great point. That *almost* makes me wish I modeled standard gauge as that would be a great thing to do in an op session; have FDR on the back of the Ferdinand Magellan car and tell the operators that the Secret Service just got into the tower and said everyone has to hold where they are until the train passes.

**LEE**



<http://www.freewebs.com/willysmb44/modeltrains.htm>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/53587910@N05/sets/72157668176638961>

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## Valuation Maps

Fri, 2018-02-16 16:29 — Jeff Youst



Doug is correct in that all the railroads created valuation maps for "governmental monetary purposes!" I purchased a CD thru the Erie Lackawanna Historical Society to help in my plan for the basement empire. A very valuable tool. Check with your respective historical society to see if they have this available or can possibly point you in a direction to obtain said maps.

Local community historical societies are also a good possible place to find Sanborns.

Jeff EL Marion 2nd (Chicago) Sub 1964

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concept and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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There are some very nice examples of background blending!

Fri, 2018-02-16 16:49 — rickwade

There's some great pictures of very nice blending. I've been working on trying to improve my blending.

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Rick



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Mt. 22: 37- 40

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## "I too like 2nd gen diesels.

Sat, 2018-02-17 00:09 — ctxmf74

*"I too like 2nd gen diesels. Love them in fact. However, the time of 2nd gen diesels does not have any way near the on-line customers to switch that preWWII does. That said, one can certainly freelance a branchline and do it the way you want it to be. "*

Hi Jim, I guess it would depend on when the railroad dieselized. There was still lots of on-line business on the SP around here in the first half of the 50's but quite a bit shut down by the 60's. The SP dieselized around 1956 so someone could come up with a decent SP layout using diesels. It is more appealing to me than the steam era as I was growing up in the 50's and watching and begging rides in the new diesels. Each new engine was exciting to see and examine, while the steamers were being scrapped and out of mind.....DaveB



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## not much photo doc on Indiana Pa



Sat, 2018-02-17 08:05 — Eric H.

Jack M,

There is little photo documentation on the PRR Indiana, Pa terminal. Here's an [image of a nice Pennsy D-class 4-4-0 at the depot](#). All of this area was torn down in the very late 1960s and a new county courthouse was erected. All the buildings across Philadelphia Street from the terminal area were also torn down. I found that image [through the Database of PA Stations Past & Present](#).

The PRR did have an interchange with the B&O just south of town. This was pretty active. The B&O line was a former Buffalo Rochester & Pittsburgh line serving many coal and coke operations through Indiana County. From what I understand, the PRR interchange was focused on empty hoppers to the B&O/BR&P and loaded hoppers back to the Pennsy.

Eric

Eric Hansmann  
Murfreesboro, TN

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## "I too like 2nd gen diesels.

Sat, 2018-02-17 08:16 — James Six

Good morning Dave,

I agree with you. I see the number of on-line customers to be switched by the railroad much like an X-Y graph in Algebra class. The graph starts out high and tapers off to the x-axis the closer in time you get to present day. We modelers just need to pick a time on the graph that has enough customers to suit us and still have the locomotives and freight cars that we like. I have an advantage over all of you, I believe. That is, I have never met a locomotive or freight car that I didn't like!!!



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## Sanborn maps and smaller towns



Sat, 2018-02-17 08:19 — Eric H.

Doug,

I think there are some Sanborn maps documenting Hinton, WV. The West Virginia & Regional History Collection at the West Virginia University Library in Morgantown, WV, has a large number of these maps. Some of them are in bound

volumes. The State Archives in Charleston should also have a collection of Sanborn maps.

Not all towns were covered by Sanborn. There were other companies and some places weren't large enough to cover. I have a copy of a New York Fire Insurance Company map of the Cass, WV, mill. Additionally, if there was no local fire department, the down could have been passed over. Lots of the details on these maps were important for fire fighting.

Your best bet for most of the C&O New River Gorge documentation are the ICC Valuation maps that you mentioned. Many historical societies are digitizing these and offering portions of the railroad they cover on a CD. have you checked with the C&ORHS for details?

Eric

Eric Hansmann  
Murfreesboro, TN

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## "I too like 2nd gen diesels.

Sat, 2018-02-17 08:27 — mdvle

*There was still lots of on-line business on the SP around here in the first half of the 50's but quite a bit shut down by the 60's.*

I think you have just confirmed what Jim said though. Given that most seem to have considered the 2nd generation of diesels to have occurred in the 60's, accurately modeling a 2nd generation diesel layout with lots of on-line businesses gets more difficult.

And of course that loss of business would be a contributing factor why the railroads starting getting into serious financial trouble by the late 60's.

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## In no way am I attempting to

Sat, 2018-02-17 09:00 — James Six

In no way am I attempting to get people to switch from modeling the diesel era to backdating to the steam era. I am only trying to dispel some false beliefs and get folks to think more before jumping into something. Just don't get into analysis paralysis.



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## 2nd Generation Diesels

Sat, 2018-02-17 09:23 — fecbill

One thought on second generation diesels. I think of the EMD -2 line and GE change from say U23b to B23-7 as second generation. That said or even if we consider the first 645 diesels as second generation, for those to show up on local freights would take another few years as they went into mainline service first.

An example, FEC bought GP40s beginning in 1971 then -2s. However they kept the fleet of GP9s into the late 90s or early 2000s. The GP9s handled most local freights while the 40s handled through freights.

I believe the same happened with steam, when diesels came on line remaining steam was sent to locals and secondary lines.

Just some thoughts.

Bill Michael

Modeling GST, generic southern town, circa 1950-62

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## Indiana, PA

Sat, 2018-02-17 10:01 — JackM

Eric,

Thanks for looking for info on Indiana. I can't find much, but did find reference that passenger trains ran until 1940 which could not have been much more than a coach or two, fitting into the discussion of pre WWII modeling. Also found reference that the freight station was brick. I drew up a track plan last night, had some problems, will try again. Small yard stub terminal, short passenger train, interchange. This is looking pretty good for my limited space. Actually taking on the characteristics of the classic British style layout, with a bit more industry.

Jack

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## Sanborn Maps

Sat, 2018-02-17 10:40 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

It appears that the American Memory collection of the Library of Congress is working state by state to digitize the Sanborn map collection. Michigan is complete although I found some towns which may not have been mapped. I checked Minnesota and the towns and counties are in place but the maps are not yet digitized but there is "place holder" for them. I found nothing for Ohio so I'm guessing they are working in alphabetical order. Just my hypothesis.

Robert

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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Ohio Sanborn Maps

Sat, 2018-02-17 10:43 — Free-Mo Tim

Good afternoon all,

Robert (dssa1051) - are there particular locations in Ohio you're looking for? I wouldn't mind searching the online archives of the Ohio Library system.

Respectfully,

Tim Moran Akron, OH

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### For this weekend, websites down

Sat, 2018-02-17 11:53 — Photo Bud

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NOTICE: Due to a scheduled power outage, the *Library's* reading rooms will be closed Feb 17-19 & **most of its websites will be unavailable from 7pm ET Feb 16 through Monday, Feb 19**. More: <https://www.loc.gov/item/prn-18-a05/?locrl=twloc> ...pic.twitter.com/l85tY39tNM. 1 reply 24 retweets 25 likes. Reply. 1. Retweet. 24.

Bud (aka John), The Old Curmudgeon

Fan of Northern Pacific and the Rock Island

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## For me the second generation

Sat, 2018-02-17 16:36 — Virginian and L...



For me the second generation of diesels would be when steam was gone and diesels were being bought to replace earlier diesels. One would not need to wait until the seventies in many cases some were being traded in in the early sixties. Look at the GP30s that rode on Alco trucks from trade ins. C630s on trade in trucks from H24-66s are another example.

Rob in Texas

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## "For me the second generation

Sat, 2018-02-17 16:41 — ctxmf74

*"For me the second generation of diesels would be when steam was gone and diesels were being bought to replace earlier diesels".*

Personally for me the 2nd generation diesels were the SP low nose GP9 and GP20 that started appearing in town around 1959....DaveB



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## There are two HUGE advantages

Sun, 2018-02-18 08:02 — James Six

There are two HUGE advantages to modeling a one-town layout. Obviously the layout is smaller than the mega layouts that are popularized and as such will fit into smaller spaces and at lower cost. The other really huge advantage is that being smaller, you can devote more time and attention to making such a layout more realistic and more accurately detailed than what you will find on the large and the mega layouts.

One of the things that I have promoted is photo backdrops, in particular photo backdrops that you create yourself instead of buying. I am doing a new photo backdrop for my furniture factory scene right now. Since I cannot go out and photograph Sturgis in a summer setting (there is way too much snow on the ground at the moment!!!!), I have come up with a new way to get the needed photos. It goes without saying that I cannot go back to the 1920s to take photos either!

So, instead of waiting to take photos in Sturgis next summer, I am using Google Maps *street view* to the actual locations that I am modeling and get screen captures to use for my needed backdrop. I am fortunate that the area of Sturgis that I

am modeling has changed little over the past 100 years. If you are interested in what and how I am doing this go to my MRH blog on *Modeling Sturgis MI in 1925-1935* and check it out.



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## Smaller?



Sun, 2018-02-18 08:40 — Lancaster

My "one town" is Fort Worth, Tx., 1960s. Two interlockings, nine class 1 railroads. Nothing fits my space.

I'm really enjoying following this topic, though. Lots of good ideas. My goal is to approach Mr. Six's skill level.

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## Ref fort worth, you don't



Sun, 2018-02-18 08:59 — Virginian and L...

Ref fort worth, you don't have to model everything, if you have the space, time and , money it would be a fantastic layout. However if you only modeled a mile or two I suspect you could still have a fantastic layout!

Rob in Texas

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## Rob is right . . .

Sun, 2018-02-18 09:18 — James Six

Rob is right in that you don't need to model everything. Pick part of your town that will fit into your available space, . . . or pick another town!

LOL 😊



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## Another town?



Sun, 2018-02-18 09:41 — Lancaster

There is no other town. Sheesh! I have resigned myself to only a very few LDEs. It just been frustrating that every feature seems to require outside corners or duck-under. But I'm hoping that the LDE and TOMA concepts combined are going to allow a fairly reasonable approximation of the area. I'm starting with a 13x15.5 space with the potential for 13x50, so TOMA rearrangement could come in really handy.

@Rick -- That 3rd photo from the top. I was thinking the fuzzy trees in the far background was the backdrop and that the area with the white house was model. But it's not, is it? The white house is also the the backdrop, right? Wow, that's really effective.

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## In building my one-town

Mon, 2018-02-19 09:16 — James Six

In building my one-town layout I have kept the two yards to a minimum. One is 5 tracks wide and about 6 feet long. The other will be two tracks wide and about 12 feet long. They are not for train classification. That is done in the staging yard with 0-5-0 switchers. LOL My two layout yards are used for setting out and picking up freight cars and for maneuvering while switching.

This keeps the space required to a minimum and allows more space for other things.



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

[@lancaster](#). [Here is a video](#)

Mon, 2018-02-19 15:19 — Virginian and L...

[@lancaster](#).

Here is a video tour of a Railroad in HO scale modeled after tracks in the city of Dallas Texas. It is owned by James Peterson the owner of Discount Model Trains in Addison.

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## Gulf Colorado Santa Fe Railroad Dallas District



- [EZ Command Experiment](#)
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When the video was made the layout was still under construction. James owns my favorite hobby shop and is very passionate about the hobby. In the beginning of the video it talks about how the actual railroad was copied to fit his space. You might find this approach useful.

Now in the interest of eliminating duck unders and fitting layouts into rooms buildings etc. I have found that keeping things in order even if the orientation needs to change helps with reality. Some places require more of this than others. It is often the only way we as modelers will get what we want into the space we have available.

I would suggest trying to put things you wish to model in a linear orientation and see if it can not be made to work for you.

Rob in Texas

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## Rob, I could never afford to

Tue, 2018-02-20 08:37 — James Six

Rob, I could never afford to even buy the scenery materials for that layout! OMG!



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## Affording the scenery

Tue, 2018-02-20 12:14 — Don Hanley

Jim



Sure you could afford to build and scenic a layout like that. It may take you the rest of your life to do so, but it's doable if you choose too. The real question is do you want too and I think that you have definitively answered that in the NO! Why else would you have started this blog.

I think the important thing to keep in mind that if we are careful consumers with the hobby most items will only need to be purchased once. Yes you will need a more rolling stock for a large layout, but you should only need to purchase it once. Of course this is based on the assumption that you know what you want to model.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## Wise words Don. Keep in mind

Tue, 2018-02-20 12:32 — James Six

Wise words Don. Keep in mind that I will be 70 this coming August and I only have about 30or40 years left to build a layout.



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## One Town of Three

Tue, 2018-02-20 12:56 — kansaspacific1

Trying to post a Sanborn map of part of West Bottoms, Kansas City.

Here goes:



Hopefully I got it sized right. Not sure I could do it again.

Chuck

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## Peppard Seed Company

Tue, 2018-02-20 13:09 — kansaspacific1

The Peppard Seed Company Elevator which is in the lower right area of the Sanborn map is the first part of this area I'm working on. Doing a mockup first. Will show some mockup/model photos later.



Chuck

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## Chuck, have you met Rob y'all

Tue, 2018-02-20 13:09 — James Six

Chuck, have you met Rob y'all think big! Lol



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## Thanks, Rob



Tue, 2018-02-20 13:18 — Lancaster

Looks like there is a series of that layout to watch -- can't wait to get through them all. (Love that blue/grey T&P striped Geep!). He has some impressive track work and it looks to me like he captures the area pretty well given the restrictions. Looks like he has an entire second floor to work with. I used to work for our area COG and have centerlined all of the rail (and many streets) in north Texas using GIS tools, so some of his track "rings a bell" with me.

I'm resigning myself to be satisfied with a more linear type of layout. But I was thinking if you can interchange TOMA modules, you ought to be able to standardize the supporting benchwork sections but make them reconfigurable for different schematics. Maybe just making too much work for myself? I'll see what transpires.

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## Jim love your comment on building your layout

Tue, 2018-02-20 15:15 — fecbill

I love your optimism..."Keep in mind that I will be 70 this coming August and I only have about 30or40 years left to build a layout".

Just think in 2030 you will be modeling something that happened 100 years ago and you will only be 82. 😊

Bill Michael

Modeling GST, generic southern town, circa 1950-62

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## Jim love your comment on building your layout

Tue, 2018-02-20 15:57 — James Six

One must be optimistic Bill. 😊



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Optimism

Tue, 2018-02-20 21:38 — umauma railway

Thanks for that thought! That means I may have another lifetime!

*I only have about 30or40 years left to build a layout.*

Neil Erickson, Umauma, HI

Visit my [weblog](#).

[Experimenting with TOMA](#)

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## As longs as ghosts from our

Wed, 2018-02-21 09:16 — James Six

As longs as ghosts from our "dark history" don't come and haul me away, I hope to make it the the century mark and beyond!



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## Remember Jim, that gentleman

Wed, 2018-02-21 15:52 — Virginian and L...



Remember Jim, that gentleman owns his own hobby shop! The key to that is modeling some of and not all of something. In his case it is some of Dallas. In my case it will be some of Wheeling, WV, (thats the way it was written in the time period I model).

The idea was to use this great thread to show how a larger city than your branch line town could be modeled using the one town concept you started. It just means different scenery and modeling a chunk that fits the goals of the builder. For some it might be two miles, for others ten miles they can all work.

It also shows how really adaptable this concept is in that it can be a small town or a big city like NY or LA or ST Louis. One just needs to find a part that will be manageable from an operations standpoint for the individual. One also needs to consider signaling, traffic, structures, operation, staging and the type of equipment one likes to run.

I still think this is one of the better ideas as far as selecting a subject to model that there is!

Rob in Texas

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## Manageable parts of a city

Wed, 2018-02-21 16:48 — Don Hanley



Well Rob being managable I guess that excludes Chicago's Dearborn Station and an operating version of 21<sup>st</sup> Street Junction.

You are quite correct it can be part of a large town. One of the intersting railroads that served Fort Wayne was the Fort Wayne Union Railway. On October 11, 1922 The Ft. Wayne Union Railway is incorporated to serve the International Harvester plant on the east side of Ft. Wayne. It is jointly owned by the Pennsylvania, Nickel Plate, New York Central and Wabash railroads, each with a 25% share in the new company. It's my understanding that each of the owners switched the line for 3 months of the year. The line was only 1.5 miles long with .5 miles of sidings



In the photo the PRR's Fort Wayne yard is at the bottom creating the southern connection with the line, the Wabash is just to the south of the US 30 highway cloverleaf intersection with Coliseum Blvd. and the NKP is just to the north. The NYC didn't have a physical connection, but most likely got there by running a switcher over the NKP from their connection at the old West Wayne yard.

I remember the tell-tail for the line under the Wabash main to warn switchmen riding on the cars of the low clearance. The ropes or light chain was hanging down in the early 80's. Besides International Harvester the line served Gladuix Refinery, and Rea Magnet Wire Co.

Other industries in the area that could be included are Phelps Dodge Magnet Wire Co. and a lumber company that was on the north side of the Wabash. I believe it was called Canfield's

The image is from Google Earth Pro dated 4/5/1998.

Some food for thought.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## I do not believe it would

Wed, 2018-02-21 20:59 — Virginian and L...



I do not believe it would exclude that Don. It seems that would be a layout that required about 100 feet (in HO) of end to end railroad and in the model form might include some curves to fit it into the room.

I suspect one could fit that layout into a 2 car garage with the usual modelers tricks and if using 2 levels have the yard on one level and the switching district on the other with a helix connecting.

I thought someone modeled the station trackage at one time as the main part of their layout. It was nicely done if I am thinking of the right line. It was not the type of model railroad I would want for myself but I thought it was a nice model railroad. If I am not mistaken I think it was in S scale.

Rob in Texas

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## You make another good point

Thu, 2018-02-22 09:14 — James Six

You make another good point Rob. The one town layout concept is very adaptable. It may work for large cities as well as small town - as long as you don't try to encompass everything in the town/city. Personally, I am not that ambitious. I only want to run a local train that comes to town, switches the local customers, then heads on out of town. I could be very happy with just this one peddler freight. But, that is just me. I am old and lacking ambition to take on more.

Keep your ideas, thoughts, and suggestions coming my friend.



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## Inspiration

Thu, 2018-02-22 09:28 — Moe line

Thanks, again, Jim, for starting this blog, just as soon as I can finish some long overdue home improvement projects, I plan to take over my game room with around 14 X 22 feet of space to build the portable modular one town layout of my hometown which will eventually become part of a much larger future layout when I can get the new outbuilding in place to house it. I will probably document the progress for a potential article for MRH magazine, with credit to you and others for the inspiration. Jim.



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## Moe line, I thank you for

Thu, 2018-02-22 09:42 — James Six

Moe line,

I thank you for your participation and for taking the time to follow along with us. I look forward to seeing the progress on that layout you are preparing for.



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## Video on the Gulf Colorado Layout

Thu, 2018-02-22 09:42 — richhard444



This is for "Grande Pacific Productions" as I have said in the past you "NEED" to "SLOW DOWN" the movement of the camera. This would be a interesting video, except that it made me dizzy trying to watch it. Sorry if this msg. seems to be negative but the truth is the truth. The moderator will probably take this down, but I have to speak my mind.

Richard

Richard - Superintendent CNW Peninsula Div.

blog - [http://mrhmag.com/blog/richard\\_harden](http://mrhmag.com/blog/richard_harden)

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## Video on the Gulf Colorado Layout

Thu, 2018-02-22 09:50 — James Six

Huh?



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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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## Comments

### Manageable Part of a Large City

Thu, 2018-02-22 15:40 — jonathan jones

My layout is a manageable part of a large city: Newark, NJ. I am modeling the small end terminal, Broad Street plus one station stop (East Ferry Street), of the CNJ's branch between Jersey City and Newark. A pocket-size urban terminal, it lends itself well to the one town concept. With a combination of freight switching, passenger trains, and commuter trains coming in and out, it offers a lot of operation and variety in a small size. I added the extra station stop at East Ferry Street to provide one additional station stop and give a little breathing space to Broad Street before the line heads into staging. It's a lot like a British-style layout in many ways. In N-scale it comes out to about 2' x 16' long. Staging adds another 3-1/2 feet on one end.

The key was limiting myself to just the end terminal as the major focus.

Jonathan

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## Jim he is replying about the

Thu, 2018-02-22 16:09 — Virginian and L...

Jim he is replying about the video I posted of a layout modeling the city of Dallas, The video was made by Arthur Houston and is on his you tube channel with hundreds of others. My real take away from it was the concept of designing his layout based on actual maps he had from the city and how he adapted them to fit his space.



Granted he is undertaking a bigger project than many want to or can afford. He does have a successful hobbyshop and I suspect that helps defray the cost somewhat. I also believe he has some regular guys that help him build the layout. Incidentally his name is James.

He did not know the video was being made at the time as Arthur was one of the guest operators on his layout. I showed him the video on my phone one day while in his store. In the comments afterward he said now I know why Arthur was so far behind in his switching.

Rob in Texas

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## On my blog on modeling 1900

Fri, 2018-02-23 08:13 — James Six

On my blog on modeling 1900 to 1940 we are discussing selecting a year or timeframe to model. Appropriate for this blog is "selecting a town to model". How do you select the one town that you will model?

I would guess that many people would choose to model the town they grew up in or a nearby town. Others might pick a popular town that others model. Still others could pick a key town on their chosen railroad. I selected Sturgis for a variety of reasons.

One prereq for my town was that it was served by both the NYC and the PRR. Also, there had to be interchange between them. Another reason was that it be within driving distance so that I could see it first hand as needed. Sturgis is a little over 30 minutes from my home. Since I had already selected a pre-WWII time frame, there had to be sufficient local train traffic that could feature local train operation and not just through trains. And let me not forget, the town would have to represent a typical Midwestern town of the time I picked to model. These are some of the reasons that I chose Sturgis, Michigan as my modeling subject, but certainly not all.



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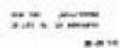
## Robl know it's doable,

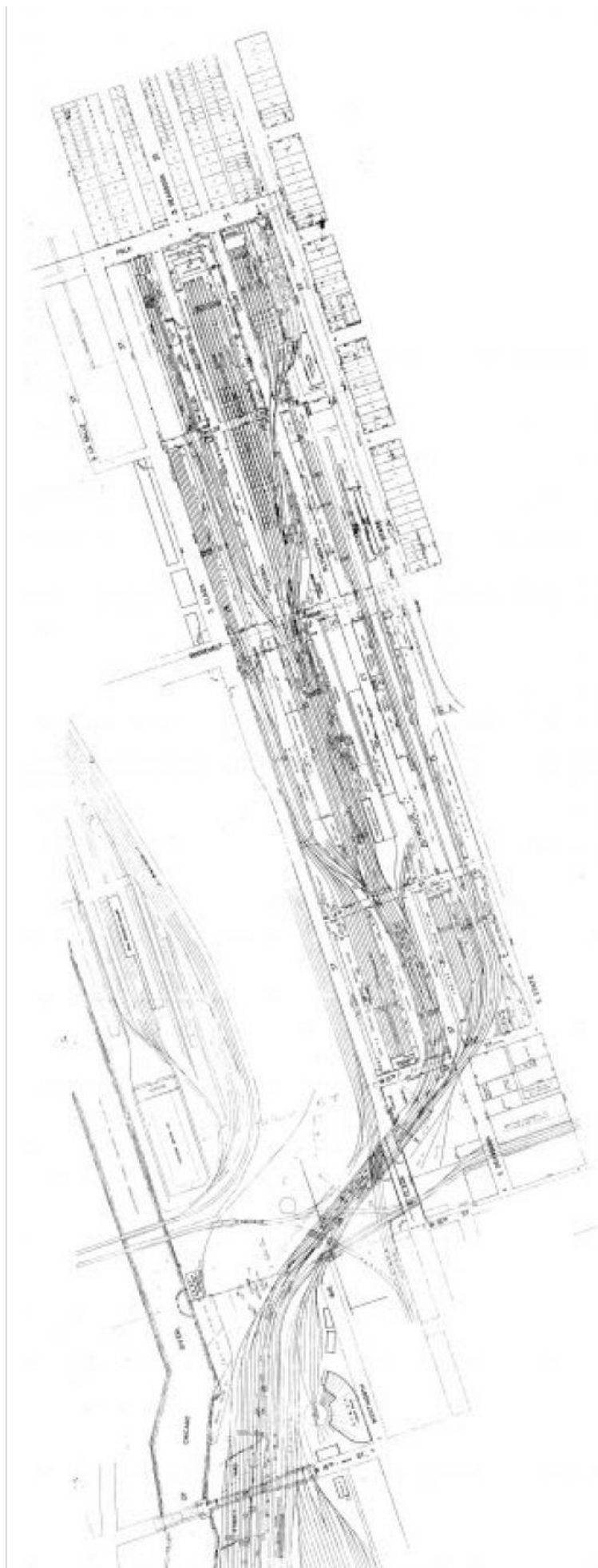
Fri, 2018-02-23 17:46 — Don Hanley

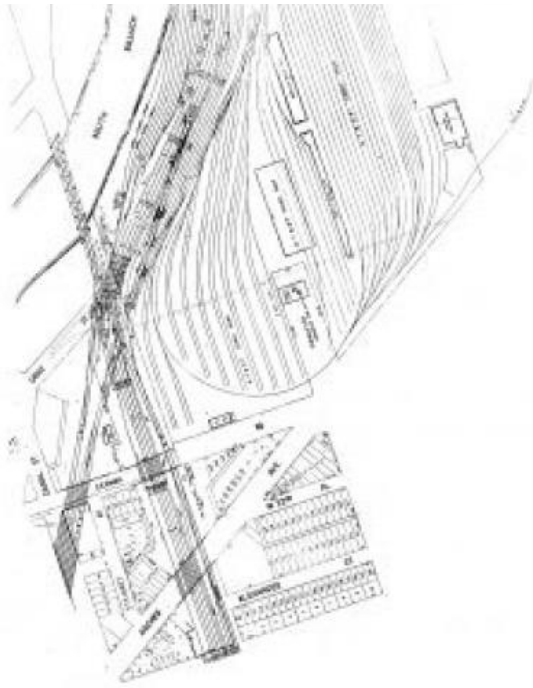
Rob



I know it's doable, however it would be a huge undertaking. Here is an image of the track plan, most likely from the 1950's since it shows the AT&SF Diesel Shops







If modeled, this it would be a major project. In the 1920's passenger service to the station was provided by the following roads, ATSF, C&O (till 1925), C&EI, C&WI, CIL (Monon), Erie, Grand Trunk Western, and the Wabash. There is also an annex that had the C&WI commuter trains and mail building. On the west side there was the REA service.

Commuter service was as follows:

- [Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad](#) (until 1935) – operated from Dearborn Station to [Crete](#), Illinois.
- [Chicago and Western Indiana Railroad](#) (until 1964) – operated between Dearborn Station and [Dolton](#), Illinois serving mostly local stops within Chicago's far south side.
- [Chicago and Erie Railroad](#) – operated from Dearborn Station to [Rochester](#), Indiana. (Early 1900's )
- [Grand Trunk Western Railroad](#) (until 1935) – operated from Dearborn Station to [Valparaiso](#), Indiana

Each of the railroads using the facility had a freight house. The freight houses were usually two seperate buildings. One for inbound LCL traffic and one for outbound LCL traffic. An interesting note is that the Erie had so much outbound LCL freight that it was shipped to Mairon OH for sorting.

If the tme period modeled is pre WWII the Erie had car float operations at 18th street. Here is the link to a previous post <http://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/node/32496> The C&E car float was located a little north of the ATSF round house on the river,

While most modelers seem to like switching and seem to gravitate to freight, modeling this would involve a lot of freight switching as well as passenger switching.

Agian it would be a major undertaing, but if done well it could be a real show stopper.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## Selecting town to model

I selected the town and neighborhood I grew up in for my model. Several reasons, the streets and structures remained stagnant from the end of WW2 to around 1980, I frequented the ROW, and later worked as a Locomotive Engineer running over the territory. The area included both the Reading and the PRR, and included two separate PRR Branches, a single RDG Branch and a stretch of Shared assets, a movable bridge and a gradually declining industrial base. With a simple changeout of era appropriate equipment, (and vehicles) I can operate 1962-1966, or 1966 - 1972, which would encompass late PRR / early PC.

So familiarity, access to Sanborn maps dating back to the 1870s, Aerial photography, Historical Society Journals and memories all help with the decision. In the Conrail Shared Asset era, the core of the subject railroad remains to trace on Google Earth, and a workable layout can be done in about 70 linear feet of benchwork.

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## What do you think of...



Fri, 2018-02-23 20:14 — kleaverjr

...modeling City of Baltimore in 1862? Not the entire actual city, but the industrial area by the one side of the harbor. Tons of freight traffic to supply the Union Army, several canning facilities (which began IIRC in Baltimore!). Although the B&O was well established in the City, from what I have found so far from a cursory search, it is manageable (though I may have to narrow the scope, as I'm considering modeling it in G Scale, so I can get extra details for the buildings and seeing a 4-6-0 in G Scale is pretty impressive. But I first must get the Erie Ave Project Layout done. Since I am only 43 I have many years left, though I don't have much time per day to work on things as my heart and other chronic health issues seem to always get in the darn way. But there are only two reasons why I stick around this planet. One is family & friends, the other is my hobby. Take away my hobby, and though family and friends are still important, what motivates me to get out of bed and actually work on things all relate to the one hobby I have left to me!

FWIW,

Ken L.

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## Selecting town to model

Fri, 2018-02-23 21:13 — James Six

Sounds good to me. Appears your reasoning is right in tune with mine. When the time comes that you can take photos of your work, please share them with us.



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## What do you think of...

Fri, 2018-02-23 21:14 — James Six

Sounds very interesting. Be aware though, you will have to scratchbuild a lot of your rolling stock. What will you use for locomotives?



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Robl know it's doable, Fri,

Fri, 2018-02-23 21:56 — Virginian and L...



*Robl know it's doable,*

*Fri, 2018-02-23 19:46 — Don Hanley*

*Rob*

*I know it's doable, however it would be a huge undertaking. Here is an image of the track plan, most likely from the 1950's since it shows the AT&SF Diesel Shops*

I did not mean for that to sound condesending. I was trying to say much the same as you it would make a spectacular layout if you liked passenger ops. There could be lots of fast paced operations on that layout and if one supported it with lots of staging it would make a great club layout.

Rob in Texas

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I thought I saw...

Fri, 2018-02-23 22:46 — kleaverjr



...Bachmann made a 4-6-0 in G Scale, which is one reason why I am tempted to go to that scale. I'm hoping that I can find accurate wheelsets. As for the cars, just like the S Scale project, I am going to heavily rely on a Laser Cutter and 3D Printer (both right now sitting in their original shipping crates/boxes) so hopefully I will be able to make what I need. Since the B&O project is a good 10 years down the road, I figure I would have time before getting into the actual ok, how do I do this. My fall back scale would be O, though I already want to do a O/On30 proto freelance Eastern Narrow Gauge Layout as well. But one project at a time. First I will do this smaller S Scale one road project, then hopefully the house/garage/workshop expansion will be done by that time, so I can do the P&A(1953)/NKP(1958) HO Layout (that is the "main" focus for me), and then it will be a toss up between the G scale or O/On30 Layout (that one goes in the existing 25x25 basement), and when those two are "done" (or to a level of completion I am satisfied with as no layout is ever "done", and if I am still alive, and able to model 25-30 years from now, the last layout I will build is an N Scale early to mid 1990s (date tbd depending on what research uncovers,m but definitely having SD-40-2's in the mix) modeling Conrails Cleveland and Buffalo Divisions?

Ambitious? YES. But much of what I want to actually model (especially the HO and N Scale layouts) will bes single track mainline with benchwork where it is just the mainline 6-12" deep, and for towns depending on what space is needed to model a town properly, 12"-24". For these "Macro-Layouts" I am more interested in modeling the transportation system, and not to have much scenery, though it will be scenicked. If I can save time and money from cuttting of several hundred square feet of scenery that doesn't serve a purpose (if a scene needs to be deep to accomodate what I want, then it will be given the space, but for single track mainline, why have it 18" deep? Though some would argue differently. To each their own I say.

OOPS, there I go on a tangent again, darn my ADHD! I never seem to keep "on topic" long enough. Drives my friends and family nuts most of the time! :-\

FWIW

Ken L

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concent and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Just how small can we maka a

Sat, 2018-02-24 10:12 — James Six

Just how small can we maka a one-town layout? IMO, this is a good and even important questions. Most of us here model in HO-scale so my words refer only to HO in this message. What constitutes a town or a city? Obviously there is typically a lot more to a towm or city that we include on our layouts. I am notinto modeling towns and cities. I am only interested in modeling what is needed to support my railroad operations.

Can one railroad customer work? For instance a coal mine. In this case there may not even be a town nearby. The coal mine could be isolated in the hills of West Virginia (or elsewhere). Will it support enough business to make it worthwhile to build a small layout, say 2'x8'? I think this could work it there was a small staling yard added to run a coal train to the mine then back to where it came from.

In my case, I could have a lot of fun just switching my furniture factorn and the feed mill/elevator next to it. All I would need are these two industries and a single track staging yard to bring a train in from and back to.

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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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## It All Depends

Sat, 2018-02-24 19:16 — Photo Bud



Model railroading is such an individual preferences hobby. If you are into huge operations, a tiny layout is totally unacceptable. If you like to railfan and just watch the trains go by, a tiny layout is probably not for you. If you enjoy scenic detail and highly accurized engines and rolling stock, a tiny layout may be just the thing! I enjoy getting my engines converted to DCC, some track work to keep me busy, and the opportunity to run some engines and do a bit of switching, so my tiny layout is fine.



Bud (aka John), The Old Curmudgeon

Fan of Northern Pacific and the Rock Island

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## Smallest One Town Layout?

Sat, 2018-02-24 11:31 — JackM

I am a fan of Lance Mindheim. One of his ideas is to not start at foot print, number of turnouts, number of industries and/or spots. But to start at what do you want your operating sessions to look like. If you are primarily a builder and operations are done in fifteen minute slots a couple of times a week, one town with a couple of multiple spot industries might be OK.

For example, Fallston on Art's Ma and Pa would work fine. However if you want four operators and taking two hours you are going to need more than that. I guess begin with an end in mind.

Jack

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## Farmersburg, IA

Sat, 2018-02-24 11:35 — dssa1051@yahoo.com

Here's a prototype that is quite small on the MILW A short siding, a Standard Oil dealer (being dismantled), an elevator, a coal shed, and a stock pen plus the depot. The depot remains today but the line is abandoned and the other structures are gone.

Robert



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## Jack, like you, I am a

Sat, 2018-02-24 11:36 — James Six

Jack, like you, I am a follower of Lance. He and I are friends too. I agree with most all of his modeling philosophies. He is quite wise about these things. I toostart my layout design with the end goals in mind. I want to be able to operate by myself or with up to four operators. That's all. I absolutely do not want a crowd of operators in my train room. LOL So, my layout design is to keep up to four guys (two two-man crews) busy for up to two+ hours.



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## Oh my Robert. That

Sat, 2018-02-24 11:41 — James Six

Oh my Robert. That Farmersburg IA setting is a PERFECT small, one-town setting for a layout. Four on-line customers plus the depot. I could build a layout for just this setting and be very happy.

Don't forget the toilet house at the far left of the photo. In those days the depots typically had the rest room out of doors.

Thanks for sharing!



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## It's doable

Sat, 2018-02-24 19:02 — Don Hanley

Rob

I didn't take it as condesending. I my intention was to show that you could model approximatly one mile of track and have a monstrous project on your hands and still stay within the one town layout concept. FYI by 1920 the station had 17,000 passenger/day arriving and departing on 122 trains. That's a lot of trains.

Don Hanley

Proto-lancing a fictitious Erie branch line.



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## A train every ten to fifteen

Sat, 2018-02-24 19:18 — Virginian and L...



A train every ten to fifteen minutes would be arriving or departing to cover 122 seperate trains. If the train sets came in on one number and left on another number (same train set change number) you would need 61 train sets! Still lots of trains but it would make for a heck of a layout.

That might be just the thing for the guy that loves passenger trains and has been collecting them all his life. I suspect he might need some friends to help with that operation!

I am not a passenger train fan so those ops don't do anything for me. I do think it would make for an impressive layout with all the activities that would take place and be very interesting to see. The urban scenery would likely be very impressive to see.

Rob in Texas

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## As to how small one could go



Sun, 2018-02-25 18:16 — Virginian and L...

As to how small one could go and model one town, there were some that would fit on a 4x8 and be prototypically accurate. I think there was one called harlem transfer or bush terminal in addition to the layout Tim Warris built for the bronx terminal layout.

All of those are very interesting layouts and very compact. They only serve one town fit the ops favorite era and require minimal locomotives. Lots of operation as cars arrive frequently and many need to depart frequently.

MR also had several small plans that were designed as urban switching layouts that were as small as 1 foot by 6 feet and another I thought was nice was 2x 10 feet. The larger was supposed to represent part of new york the smaller was a generic location but was nicely thought out.

Rob in Texas

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## How small

Mon, 2018-02-26 07:11 — mdvle

Related to the NYC transfer layouts like Harlem, Erie's W28th Street yard's dimensions work out to 2.3' x 8.9' in HO <http://members.trainweb.com/bedt/indloco/err28.html>

Similarly there are lots of layouts around around 8' in length, some shorter. In particular you can look at the European modelers for inspiration. Anyone interested in a small shelf style layout may find this PDF of a NMRA convention presentation interesting <http://www.amherstrail.org/ABEL/Downloads/Shelf-Layouts.pdf>

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six

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Coming up with space to build that dream layout has always been a frustrating obstacle for model railroaders, and I suspect that it will always be. It is fine between having enough space and time to build a model railroad layout. After more than sixty years in out hobby I believe that the vast majority of model railroaders do not have much space for a layout. I am working to develop the concept of a **one-town layout**. Such a layout does not need to be large, and in fact can be nicely fit onto a small room such as a spare bedroom. This blog is for people without the space of the resources to build a large dream layout. We will discuss the concept and design of one-town layouts that will fit into smaller spaces.

James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Small town, small layout. Big satisfaction.

Mon, 2018-02-26 16:41 — Dunks

Farmersburg, IA, is the kind of small, simple prototype that is very popular as a muse for layouts in the U.K.: the "BLT", or branch line terminal. Typically, we have less available space and hence portable layouts are popular. And by portable, I don't just mean taking the layout out of the house to shows, but stowing it away in a closet somewhere.

Such layout concepts are very useful when exploring the finescale end of things, such as "Proto" track and wheel standards with handbuilt track and converted equipment. The limited requirements for equipment are a positive boon in this respect, but because we typically have an active fiddle yard deployed, once (not if) extra locos and rolling stock are produced, then we can change trains off scene: there are lots of designs for fiddle yards, too.

The small one-station town has another advantage, in that if you don't need much, you can concentrate on quality and not quantity. Far better to have a couple well-running locos than a large stud of so-so runners that require too much time for maintenance. And being smaller, the layout invites this sort of closer inspection, so the extra effort in fully detailed track, scratchbuilt lightly distressed structures, carefully weathered equipment and indeed, exquisitely modelled grass, trees and other scenic details.

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In brief, if short of space, do not despair: the single-railroad 4 turnout terminus is here to save you!

Simon

Live and let live: celebrate diversity in every aspect of the hobby.

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## One-town Layouts

Thu, 2018-01-04 15:50 — James Six   [Layout design](#)  
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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### Mark, It sounds like you have

Sat, 2018-03-03 17:00 — James Six

Mark,

It sounds like you have thought things out carefully. Just be careful not to let the "I wants" over power you logic and common sense like I have too many times. Today I am ruthless about sticking to my plan which is doable and certainly not crowded. My line is really two lines. One is the PRR's GR&I line from Ft Wayne up into Michigan and on to Mackinaw City. The other line is the NYC's Pumpkinvine line from Goshen IN to Battle Creek MI. These lines paralleled each other in Sturgis and were oriented north/south there. Sturgis is much less challenging than Johnstown or Steubenville, so I should be able to complete what I have started.

Take care,

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Sat, 2018-03-03 21:13 — Benny

That's the point, though, if you have an urban layout then it Will be crowded.

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## If it is this Rob it is

Sun, 2018-03-04 00:48 — Virginian and L...



If it is this Rob it is Wheeling not Stubenville. Wheeling was my choice for several reasons one of which was the narrow valley and heavy industry along the creek and river. Many similarities to Johnstown in that there was lots of coal, steel and other industries. The depth of scene is reasonable to compress, and a short length that does not represent a division point looks like it would provide lots of action yet not require an army of clerks and staff to run it.

For me it also will allow for industries that take in lots of freight cars. Long trains with big power can be run and will fit in. My time period is 1959 so Industry is still working and the decline is just beginning. Tracks were pulled up in the 80s as most of the industries left in that time period and the term rust belt seemed to follow not much later.

Total length of area I will be modeling is less than ten miles, so it will not need lots of compression. The area was served by the Pennsy, B&O and the Wheeling and Lake Erie.

There is lots more to go on about, but I will leave it at that for the moment. As to floods there were many along the rivers that covered the area. Johnstown was up stream from Wheeling and the water would eventually find its way to the Ohio River.



Here is a panarama of the riverfront that would just about cover the entire area I wish to model. The photo was from a hill top on the other side of the river. One good way to choose a section of railroad to model is something like this, can most of it be seen from one vantage point? If so you might not be trying to cram to much into your layout.

As to crowding, some areas are more built up than others but even with zero clearance zoning it is possible to crowd things by putting too much into the compressed space we have. It is often wise to leave somethings out since we are not modeling the entire thing to scale. The idea for many of us is to capture the feel of a place rather that to build a scale model of a city.

Rob in Texas

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James Six, *Modeling a one-town layout*

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### That makes sense John. I

Mon, 2018-03-05 21:20 — James Six

That makes sense John. I don't know how to tell someone I don't like their layout. So, I find something about it that I do like and compliment them on it.



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