

Structures and Detailing

With the benchwork, track, terrain, and landscaping done, you nearly have a completed layout. However, there are a few more items necessary to add the final touches and produce a finished product that you can be proud of. Structures, detailing and signs are these final additions to the railroad. They are important because they make the whole scene seem to come alive.

You have probably been thinking about structures all along and perhaps have some locations created for them. Maybe you have a few structures built. Now is the time to get them placed on the layout and add all the finishing touches that enhance their realism.

Another area we will look at in this chapter is detailing. When model railroaders talk about detailing their layouts or models, they mean adding all the items that individualize and enhance the reality of the scene. Detailing can take your railroad and models out of the ordinary category and push them toward excellence. Even if the layout is completed, many detailing touches can still be added to make the models and layout unique.

Signs can be seen as part of detailing, but they will be discussed as a separate topic because of their importance in adding color, interest and realism to the layout. They are an easy item to add to either a new layout or a more completed one.

STRUCTURES

A railroad layout with completed terrain and landscaping is ready for the buildings that will fill in the spaces left for towns, industries, rail facilities and yards. Structures are important on the railroad to give it a time orientation and help set a geographic location. They can also help camouflage structural problems and provide view blocks for the trains.

Hobby shops carry a wide variety of building kits for structures in paper, wood, plastic, cast resin and metal, as well as ready-made buildings. The skill range needed for these kits runs from those which require a very minimum of construction to those which are literally a box of sticks and require *craftsman* level skills to construct. Another option for building structures is to purchase or fabricate the pieces yourself and scratchbuild whatever buildings you desire. If you are a beginning modeler, stick with the easier kits at first, until you get some experience and practice in building. These buildings can always be replaced later on with scratchbuilt or craftsman type structures as your skills increase.

The structures placed on the layout can be those associated with the railroad itself such as roundhouses, coaling facilities, depots, or ice facilities; industrial buildings like mines, sawmills, stamp mills, or logging facilities; and city or town buildings such as houses, stores, service stations, and local businesses. Plan to include a mixture of these types of structures on the layout for the most realism.

Do not think just in terms of large buildings. Many of the buildings that occur frequently on the railroad landscape are small ones; tool sheds, outhouses, storage sheds, and line shacks. These small structures can add a lot of character and realism to the layout without a lot of time or cost in building.

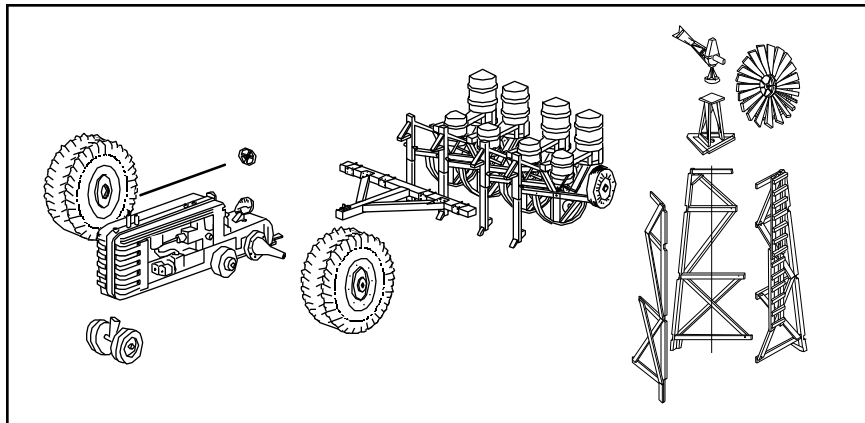
As you select structures to buy or *scratchbuild*, be sure to note the size and shape that the base of the structure will require. This information may be included in the kit or in the plan for a scratchbuilt structure. Make a paper pattern in the size and shape of the base of each building you plan to include. These can be moved around the layout to select locations for structures and to make sure they will fit. This is particularly important if you are working with a small layout area.

Some of the best-quality building kits available at a reasonable price are those made by Design Preservation Models. They have an extensive line of highly detailed injection molded styrene building kits. There is also the freedom to design your own buildings with their modular building walls. The DPM Gold Kits are highly detailed, complete building scenes, complete with white metal castings and Dry Transfer Decals.

Also available, are the **Woodland Scenics Town and Factory N scale** and **City & Industry HO scale Building Sets**. They were created to complement the **Woodland Scenics Scenic Ridge N scale** and **Grand Valley HO scale Lightweight Layout Kits**, but will look great on any layout.

DPM ModularKits can be put together in various ways to make a custom structure to fit your layout. The kits include both city and industrial structures. With the modular pieces, it is possible to design almost any type of building. The Design Preservation kits are economical as well as easy to build. Lots of additional detailing can be added to make totally unique structures which will make any modeler look like an expert.

Woodland Scenics Complete Scene Kits and **Trackside Scenes** are designed



Scenic Details are buildings, vehicles, or other small items cast in white metal with lots of intricate detail, which is cast into the parts. They are easy to assemble by cleaning the castings and gluing together with super glue. Paint with the Woodland Scenics Mini-Scene Paint Set.

for the modeler who wants fine quality craftsmanship, intricate detail, and authenticity. The same detail and craftsmanship can be found in the many small buildings available in the **Woodland Scenics Scenic Details**. Complete Scenes are ones that could be used almost anywhere on the layout, but may be particularly appropriate in a town area. Trackside Scenes are specific industries and scenes that would be seen along the track area. The Scenic Details buildings include a variety of town and rural structures.

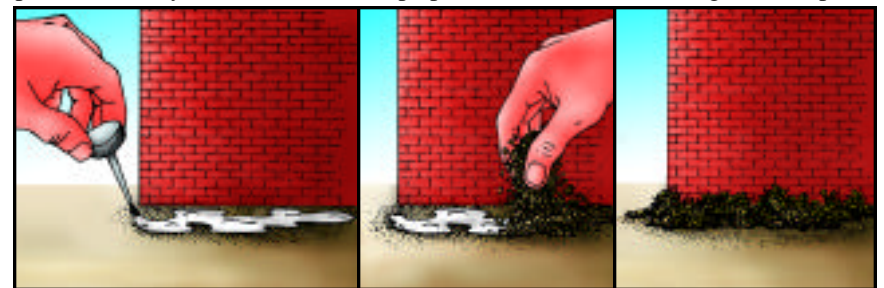
Each of the Complete Scenes and Trackside Scenes contain white metal castings, plus all the Turf, trees, and accessories needed to finish the scene. The Scenic Details buildings include the structure plus figures or detailing items needed to complete it.

Woodland Scenics Mini-Scenes in HO scale add humor and realism to your layout. These complete kits contain the pewter castings, landscaping materials and easy-to-follow instructions. Assemble and then finish with our Mini-Scene Paint Set. Miniature lovers also will enjoy building and finishing these scenes, which then can be displayed in our 3-inch diameter Glass Dome.

Use the **Woodland Scenics Mini-Scene Paint Set** to complete any of these kits. Individual instructions are included with each kit. In general, the metal pieces are filed to smooth rough edges, trial-fitted, and assembled with super glue. The Mini-Scene Paint Set includes 12 colors for painting any of the scene kits. Be sure to wash your hands after working with the kit pieces.

How structures are attached to the layout varies, depending on what the structure is and where it is to be placed. If the structure is fairly stable and is going into a flat space, you may not wish to attach it at all. Just set the structure in place and then use some of the Turf products, Clump-Foliage, Foliage Clusters, Field Grass, or Poly Fiber to plant bushes and grass around the bottom of the building to conceal its connection with the layout. This also works well if a building is going to be moved to a different location later on or replaced with another building.

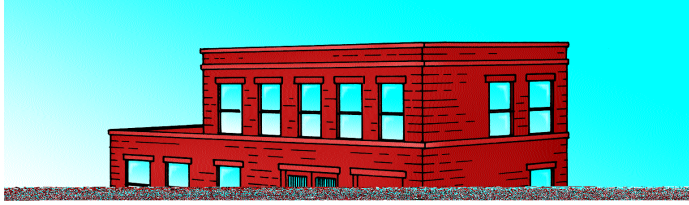
More permanent placement can be achieved by attaching the building to a piece of plywood, Masonite, or plastic. Then landscape the piece, and place the whole piece on the layout. Use the landscape products to conceal the edges of the piece



Camouflaging the junction of buildings with the layout and hiding seams or cracks in terrain areas will give a more realistic look to the layout. Spread Scenic Glue to cover these seams and cracks and then add the Turf products, Foliage, Clump-Foliage, Foliage Clusters, Fine-Leaf Foliage, or Lichen to create the appearance of bushes, vines and weeds.

of wood and blend into the other scenery. Some buildings may look better if their bases are slightly recessed into the terrain base of the layout. Using a very thin piece of Masonite may avoid this situation. However, if it cannot be avoided, cut a shallow recess in the Plaster Cloth, or other table top material, the size of the base of the building or the piece of wood it is attached to. Set the building in this recession. More Plaster Cloth or Mold-A-Scene can be used around the edges to smooth out the terrain, and Turf products can be used to blend the building into the landscape.

Because of the way they are constructed, some buildings may need to be attached



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directly to the layout. This is particularly true in the case of structures sitting on uneven terrain or those that fit into the sides of mountains, such as mines. Use Lightweight Hydrocal, or Scenic Glue, depending on the material of the structure and the layout material it is being attached to. See pages 114-116 for another method of attaching structures. It involves making a Plaster Cloth mask of the area where you want the building, moving the mask to your workbench, attaching the building to the mask and then installing the whole piece on the layout.

Keep in mind that once attached, the structures cannot be easily moved around to another location or removed to a new layout. If a building is fairly inexpensive and easy to construct, this may not be a problem. But if it is a craftsman kit or scratchbuilt structure with many hours of labor involved, other alternatives might need to be considered before permanently attaching the structure to the layout. Perhaps the structure can be built as part of a small diorama which is attached to the layout. Then this entire diorama might be able to be moved to another location or layout. Another possibility is to build the structure as part of a small modular section of the layout. This module, with the structure attached, could then be moved to a new location.

DETAILS

There are probably areas that can use some extra landscape materials to provide more ground cover or more variety of color or texture. Some extra rock outcroppings or field stones might make the scene look more natural. Perhaps there are some areas where structural problems such as the junction of the terrain base and side or back contour boards can be better camouflaged by more bushes or a grouping of trees. Be sure Talus of various sizes has been placed around tunnel portals, retaining walls, along the bottom of culverts, down mountain valleys, and below rock cliffs.

What about the buildings? Have you put in driveways, sidewalks, parking lots, and paths as demanded by the type of building? Remember that the world is not always neat and clean. Add some oil spills around railroad facilities and service stations, and some spilled rock and coal around mines or loading areas. Put some ruts in roads or cracks in concrete items. Stretch Foliage or Poly Fiber to make vines, ivy, moss, or other clinging plants on buildings, tunnel portals, and retaining walls.

Woodland Scenics Mini-Scenes and Scenic Details provide many possibilities for small scenes and detail items. All are highly detailed and realistic to add interest to the scenery. Each Mini-Scene includes everything needed to build and landscape a small scene that can be incorporated into the layout to add interesting or amusing detail. Included in the Scenic Details are a number of items that can be added along track areas, in towns, and rural areas. These include such items as water towers, fuel stands, street and traffic lights, skids, mailboxes, and vending machines. These small detailing items can often make the difference

between a good layout and a great layout.

Color is another important detailing item. Be sure to look carefully at the layout for places where color can be added. The actual landscape colors which appear in the world are fairly muted, but this does not mean that splashes of color do not exist. If the general appearance of the layout is dull, look for spots to add color. Remember that rock areas contain more than one color. Perhaps you need to go back and add more color to these castings. Look at the ground cover and foliage to make sure there are some lighter and some darker areas. Patches of flowers or some flowering or fruit trees can also help add color. Have you fully detailed the buildings and towns with the addition of signs, posters, and advertisements? Colorful vehicles, people, animals, street signs, and street markings can be spread around the layout to add both color and interest. The Scenic Details include a number of vehicles and animals that are very helpful for this type of detailing. Also a number of the Mini-Scenes and Scenic Details include figures of people.

Many industries, mines, businesses and homes have various types of junk lying around-discarded machinery, barrels, pallets, lumber, rocks, tree branches, lengths of pipe, tires, and chunks of concrete. Industrial Junk, Trackside Junk, or Assorted Junk Piles are available from Woodland Scenics as part of the Scenic Details line. These pieces are ready to paint and place on the layout. Or use left-over pieces from kits, broken items, excess chunks of castings, small lengths of scale lumber, and other small items you might be considering throwing away. Mix them all together to place behind buildings, in yards, or near mine entrances. Mix in some landscape material and plant some Field Grass growing out of the pile to create a very realistic junk pile.

SIGNS AND GRAPHICS

Look around at buildings, signs, train cars and engines on the layout. One thing that is immediately noticeable is that they almost always have some kind of writing, numbers, or pictures on them. The layout will appear bland and unrealistic if this facet of the real world is not duplicated.

Woodland Scenics Dry Transfers and **Model Graphics Dry Transfers** are a very effective method of detailing engines, rolling stock, buildings, fences, vehicles, and other items. They are easy to use on either smooth or textured surfaces, leaving no unnatural film around the edges. Dry Transfers will adhere to wood,

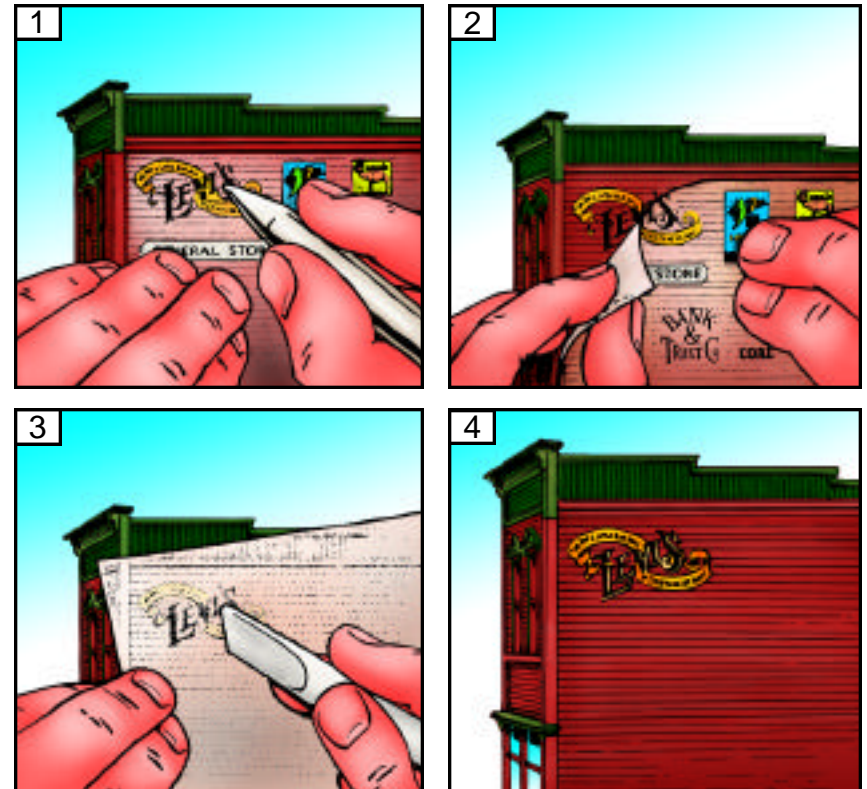


TECH TIP

Be sure to include Dry Transfers as a detailing feature on windows. Advertising signs would appear on the windows of stores, taverns, restaurants and depots. Dry Transfers can easily be added to these areas without leaving an unsightly film around the edge of the sign. The Mini-Series Dry Transfers include signs, which are small enough for windows in N scale.

metal, paint, plastic, paper, and other surfaces. Numbers and letters in a variety of typefaces and colors are available, as well as stripes in various widths and colors in Model Graphics Dry Transfers. Woodland Scenics Dry Transfers include some letters and numbers as well as railroad heralds, boxcar data and labeling, warning signs, business signs, advertising signs, posters, and company logos. It is even possible to create individualized signs by using the letters, numbers, and stripes.

Dry Transfers are very easy to use, even for beginners. Just position the Dry



Woodland Scenics Dry Transfers can be attached to any surface, smooth or textured. 1. Position the Dry Transfer where desired and rub over it with a Woodland Scenics Burnisher or dull pencil. 2. Carefully pull away the carrier sheet. 3. Then place the backing paper over the decal and burnish again. Use a gummy-type eraser or your finger to work the Dry Transfer gently into a textured surface. 4. The decal is in place.

Transfer where you want it, rub gently on the top with a burnisher, and slowly lift off the carrier sheet. Then place the backing paper over the decal and gently rub again. To attach to a textured surface, burnish carefully. Then press the Dry Transfer into the ridges or bumps with your thumb, or a gummy-type eraser, and it will stretch and adhere in cracks and crevices as fine as brick texture.

Numbers, letters, stripes, boxcar data, and warning signs can be used on engines

and rolling stock to create extra detail, add color, and personalize them for your railroad. Use the advertising signs and logos on buildings, vehicles, signs, billboards, and fences. Some of the signs indicate a particular time period that can help with the time orientation of the layout.