



Volume 22
Issue 9

September, 2009

BANTRAK

Newsletter

The Engineer's Cab

Alan DelGaudio



Greetings, all! I hope the summer was a good one!

We had a nice time at the Bedford N-scale weekend. Some pictures are included in this issue. For those that haven't been to Bedford, there were (and usually are approximately) 13 N-scale clubs, each setting up a layout of about 14 x 28. A few are larger or smaller.

What's nice is to see some of the styles other clubs present. The Cantington club from Ohio has a lot of prototypical C&O scenes; Cass, Thurmont; South Jersey combined with Central New Jersey for some very attractive modules. Their layout is more free-form with 2 end loops. I was impressed with their trees. They told me they use "huckleberry" bushes for the trunks. There were other clubs from Pennsylvania, Central Ohio, etc.

I'm happy to say our layout was up-front and looked pretty good. Granted I'm partial, but the common shades of blue on our sky boards do tie a diverse group of modules together. Kudos to Martin for the plan. We were able to use Bob Mohr's city as a yard, which allowed us to display more of our modules in the given space we had. Everyone had a chance to run!

While we were at Bedford, we were informed of the passing of Matt Schaefer from NVNTrak. This was a sad moment and a profound loss.

What's coming up?

Tim is working with Bob Mohr on a plan for the October show. We're looking to set up something different from our last 2 or 3 Timonium layouts, so let's get behind them! Remember this is the weekend of Oct 9-11.

Right after that, October 16-18, Paul Diley and Bob Winterbottom will be planning a smaller layout at the B&O for steam weekend. Prep your steamers! Whether you pull 4 cars or 40, this is the event. I'd like to ask the club to work on this carefully.

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Next meeting...

September 20, 2009
2:00 pm

Dave and Denise Clyde's
house, Baltimore

On the web...

News, information, and
forums are all at:

<http://www.bantrak.net/>

Weathering N-Scale Flat Cars

A One-Evening Project To Make Your Flats Look Good!

John Darlington

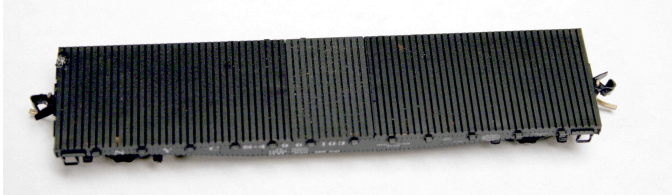


Photo 1

As most of you know, the facets of model railroading that I like the best are building scenery and weathering buildings, engines, and rolling stock. It is to the latter subject that this article is directed.

A few months ago, I spotted an article in *Model Railroader* describing an interesting technique to make the wooden flooring of plastic flat cars look more realistic. The problem with plastic simulated wood is that it seems difficult to disguise that “plastic” look, especially in N scale. The painted simulated wood surfaces either look too uniform, or lack something to take that artificial look away. This article seemed to overcome these problems and I was intrigued by the simplicity of the techniques used.

The one drawback of this article was that it applied to HO scale rolling stock. It entailed the skillful use of an air brush to create the contrasting wooden surfaces which would be nearly impossible to duplicate in N scale, at least for me. I decided to take a couple of cheap flat cars that I had in my inventory (*photos 1 and 2*), and experiment with brush painting. I

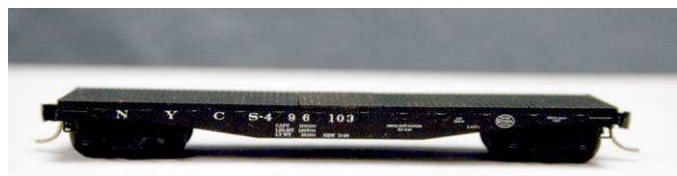


Photo 2

really was not investing much money, if I messed up, and I could always hide my mistakes with a flat car load. To my surprise, my initial attempt turned out pretty well, so I decided to do another flat car for this step-by-step article. Some of the techniques I describe in the following paragraphs are fairly rudimentary for some BANTRAK members, but I thought it would help those who have never attempted weathering and also act as a refresher to those more experienced. One thing that needs emphasis is that there are many different techniques to weathering and that you may do things differently than me. The only thing that is important is that the finished product looks good – to *you*.

The technique I am using is the same as was used in the article, minus the air brush. Since most natural wood will gray over time, the key to this weathering is to use multiple colors of gray to show various stages of weathering of individual wood planks. For this project, I used Reefer Gray, Lettering Gray and MOW Gray, all made by Polly Scale. Additionally, I used Polly Scale Dirt as well as various colored chalks.

The initial step is to remove all moveable parts from the car including trucks, couplers

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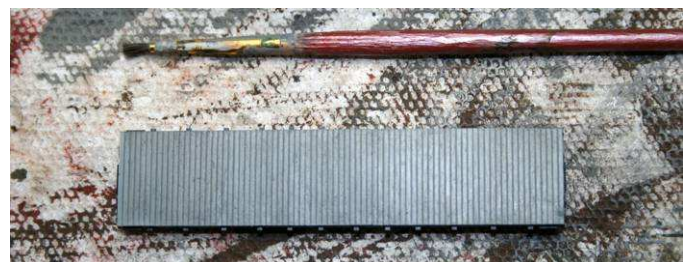


Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5

and brake wheels. We will deal with those parts later. What you want to work with at this point is the flat car frame. I applied a coat of Reefer Gray to the flat car bed (*photo 3*). You may need to apply an additional coat, depending on the car's original color. The important thing is to completely cover the bed including the individual cracks between planks so that the car color does not shine through. I let this dry for about 30 minutes.

Next, I applied streaks of Lettering Gray using the drybrush technique. For those who have not used that before, dip your brush into the paint and then blot off 95% of the paint on a rag. The remaining 5% is applied to the car using a very light stroke of the brush bristles. (*Caution! This is a three- or four-step application – a little bit goes a long way if you do it correctly*). After my first drybrush application, I went back over the surface with Reefer Gray using the drybrush technique. You will probably find



Photo 7

that you will be alternating between Reefer and Lettering Gray paint until you get the planks to your liking. Finally, again using the drybrush technique, I applied some of the MOW Gray paint to some of the surface areas. You will find that this color gives a slight brownish-gray cast, which looks like a little bit of worked-in grime.

Once I was satisfied with the surface, I applied powdered black chalk (*photos 4 and 5*) using an up and down motion corresponding with the direction of the plank grains, being sure to use a very soft brush in order to prevent any grooving of the paint surface. Finally, I applied a little bit of dark brown chalk to enhance the look of worked-in grime. When I was happy with the flat car surface, I put it aside to dry.

The next thing to tackle is weathering the couplers, truck sides and wheels. If you have ever tried to apply chalk to truck sides and wheels, you know that the plastic used for these parts has a very slick surface. Now, you can do this weathering job in two ways, both of which I have used. You can disassemble the truck sides from the wheels and apply a coat of Dull Cote to their surfaces to create a "bite" on the surface that the chalk will adhere to. The



Photo 6

problem with this is that you have to be careful that you do not get any Dull Cote on the wheel axles or journals. The technique I used for this project was to paint the truck sides and wheel centers with Polly Scale Dirt. This not only gives you more control and that "bite", but it acts like a background to the later application

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of chalk (*photo 6*). If your couplers are part of the truck assembly then go ahead and paint



Photo 8

them as well, being careful not to get any excess paint in the coupler knuckle. If you have body-mounted coupler assemblies, paint them, paying attention to the caution above.

By now, my flat car body was dry enough to handle so I could apply a drybrush application of "Dirt" to the body sides (*photo 7*), being careful not to use too much paint. Once the sides were dry, I started to apply weathering chalk to them as well as to the other parts described above. I tried to match the chalk with the "Dirt" paint color so that both blend in. At this stage you may consider spraying the flat car body with Dull

Cote before attaching the trucks to the underside of the car. I do not use the Dull Cote



Photo 9

for two reasons. First, I use Bragdon chalks, which have an additive in them that makes the chalk adhere to the surfaces without it. Secondly, Dull Cote has a tendency to wash away the chalk, requiring multiple applications to get the same effect.

Once your modeling work meets your satisfaction, use a light air spray to remove any excess chalk. The final step is to operate the car on the layout (*photos 8, 9, and 10*).

I can see no reason why these weathering techniques cannot work on structures as well, and I guess that I will try that next.



Photo 10

In Memoriam

It is with deep regret that we share the news of the passing of **Matt Schaefer** of Northern Virginia NTRAK. If you ever met Matt, you would never forget him. His *Hawk's Nest* module set was one of the first NTRAK modules that didn't follow the angled corners standard, instead opting for a free-form curve that made for a truer prototype look. His enthusiasm for the hobby was infectious and he was a great leader who led quietly. He saw things through a different set of eyes; looking at a module drawing, you would see lines on a paper – he would see the finished project and how it would look with a train running through it. If there's an NTRAK Hall of Fame, Matt has a rightful place in it.

Upcoming Events

October 17 The CONRAIL Express excursion – rare mileage and exciting sights along the Norfolk Southern's Port Road Line. Departs from Philadelphia's 30th Street Station. For more information, see TheCRHS.org.

October 2-4 Disney's A Christmas Carol Train Tour comes to Baltimore. It's free and fun for the whole family! At the B&O Railroad Museum. For more information, see www.christmascaroltraintour.com.

Site of the Month: NMRA Chesapeake Division

Matthew Davis

Since the Mt. Clare Division of the NMRA shut down, Baltimore has not been part of an NMRA division. But now there's a new NMRA Chesapeake Division serving Baltimore and nearby counties. BANTRAK's own Arthur Boyd has been active in setting up the new division.

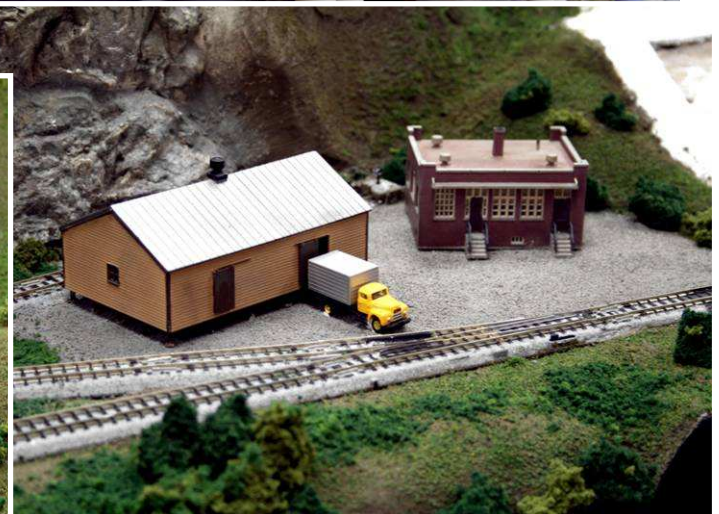
At their web site, www.trainweb.org/chesapekmemnmra, you can find a number of inspiring photos of layouts, including Arthur's. A great resource is the list of "Historical Links", which is a one-stop shop for links to historical societies, railroads, and museums related to the railroads that have run in the area.

While you're there, you can sign up to receive the division newsletter – it's free if you get it by e-mail!



MB Klein Layout

Photos by John Darlington



Photos From Bedford

Photos by Jack Walsh and Alan DelGaudio



photo by Jack Walsh



photo by Jack Walsh



photo by Alan DelGaudio

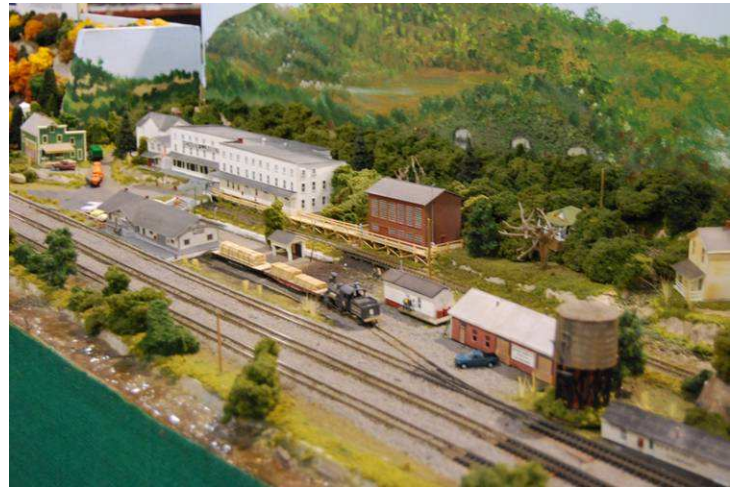


photo by Alan DelGaudio

The Engineer's Cab (continued)

Steam is less forgiving of the gaps in joiner tracks (surprise!), so we should plan a morning crew on Saturday to tighten up joiner track gaps and fix any humps where the modules meet.

I'm working on another show before the B&O Festival of Trains. Originally planned for just before Thanksgiving, it may be the weekend after. More information will follow.

As for B&O, some things to plan on are: clean up the modules; dust them; and touch up the sky boards (front and back). If you need blue paint, we'll try to have some at the 2 October shows. Lighting was used last year and we should plan on that again this time. Of course, more lights or animation help create interest.

In the questionnaire at the beginning of the year, one idea was to have a way for kids to run a layout.

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The Engineer's Cab (continued)

Maybe we can have a 10 x 5. I have 2 x 180 degree end loops we can use. We may not need to make it to the current N-Track standards. I'm throwing this out as food for thought.

Martin is gearing up for the raffle layout project at the Clydes'. If true to form, it may wander around the Greater Baltimore area a bit to make it easier for our membership to work on it. You do NOT need to be a modeling guru! I've learned more about model railroading doing projects like this than any 3 books can tell me. Or maybe it's after doing, the books make more sense! Let Martin know when you can help.

As the raffle layout picks up steam, our work on the M.B. Klein N-scale store layout is close to completion. We are down to a few tasks and pouring the river! Bob Mohr has done a great job of coordinating electrical work, carpentry and modeling. Thanks to many other who have also contributed to all 3 phases of the job. An added bit of enjoyment is when Skip and Bob have constructive discussions about what to do next. The folks at MBK seem very pleased indeed.

I'm likely to miss the September meeting due to family obligations in New York, but Martin and Eric will have things in hand. We should make a punch list of items that need overhaul, if not by October then for sure by November. The yard legs need attention [adjustment feet are falling out] and some of the stanchion bases need new PVC pipe fittings. I have been bequeathed 10 more bases [non concrete] that should be painted yellow. So a work session of sorts is in order.

Our next meeting is September 20 at David and Denise Clyde's home.

Alan

BANTRAK was founded in 1983 as the Greater Baltimore N-Scale Associates. Begun as a "round robin" group to share skills and experiences, we have expanded our focus to include participation in many diverse activities to promote model railroading in general and N-Scale model rail-roading in particular. Activities include participation in local, regional and national shows, meets and conventions. **BANTRAK membership includes membership in the national NTRAK organization.**

President

Alan DelGaudio (410) 480-9155

Treasurer

Tim Nixon (410) 757-5045

Membership

Al Palewicz (410) 426-0339



BANTRAK Calendar

9/20 — BANTRAK Meeting at Dave and Denise Clyde's

10/10-11 — Scale Show, Timonium Fair Grounds (setup 10/9)

10/16-18 — Steam Weekend, B&O Railroad Museum

The BANTRAK Newsletter is the official publication of the Baltimore Area N-TRAK organization.

This is your newsletter! Please send articles, photos, and suggestions to matthew@houseofflameandglass.com.

Editor: Matthew Davis

