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# Adding vintage trucks – and realism

By Lou Sassi



4-1

A variety of trucks populated the highways during the 1950s. Adding these trucks to your layout gives it a feeling of authenticity.

Photos by the author

Whether it is a semi-trailer at a warehouse loading dock, a pickup at a construction site, or a hi-rail vehicle parked next to the depot, trucks add realism to a layout, 4-1. Trucks and trains just seem to go together.

The number of 1950s-era truck models, offered as kits or ready-to-run, has increased greatly over the past decade. Most of the truck kits are either cast resin or white metal, and both kinds require some skill to assemble. Ready-to-use vehicles are, as the name suggests, assembled, painted, and can go from the

package to your layout with little or no extra work.

No matter if the truck is a kit or ready-to-run, by adding a few details you can really make your vehicles stand out.

All the models described in this chapter are HO scale. While truck models are available in several scales, the selection in 1:87 proportion is much greater, which makes it easier to show the different classes of trucks from the 1950s.

## Semi-trailers

If a company wasn't served by rail or if it had goods that didn't require ship-

ment by railroad, it would use semi-trailers. On your layout, semi-trailers would look appropriate at a warehouse, transloading center, or truck terminal.

Mack's B61 tractor was a common sight on highways throughout the United States in the 1950s. Athearn offers a ready-to-use B61 tractor, 4-2, and Alloy Forms has one in kit form. The prototype B61, and the firm's B20 through B80 series tractors, were first produced in 1953 and stayed in production for the next 14 years.

For behind the B61 tractor, Classic Metal Works provides a line of injection-molded plastic trailers in both N and HO scales. The trailers are available decorated for a variety of trucking companies as well as undecorated. One example is a Freuhauf 32-foot trailer decorated for Eastern Motor Express, 4-2, which includes both raised and lowered landing gears that a modeler can install.

One manufacturer, Ulrich, has been producing truck models for more than a half century. The company's original line of tractors and trailers, like their prototype counterparts, was first produced in the 1950s. Most of the firm's products have been reissued. A full list of Ulrich products can be found on its Web site, [www.ulrichmodels.com](http://www.ulrichmodels.com).

When modeling local prototypes, adding details provides a finishing touch. As an example, George Micklus made a semi-trailer based on a prototype owned by Nuzzi Oil Co. in northern New Jersey, 4-3. George started with an Ulrich Mack Bulldog H60 metal tractor kit and added several details, including windshield wipers, horn, headlight lenses, and marker light jewels. He made the window glazing from clear styrene sheet cut to fit.

International Harvester, a well-known farm implement manufacturer, also produced tractors during the 1950s. Classic Metal Works offers single-axle, ready-to-use, die-cast metal R-190 tractors in N and HO scales, 4-4. The firm's models are based on the prototype produced from 1953 to 1968.

## Dual-wheeled trucks

To help better distribute weight and increase the payload of trucks, manufacturers placed four wheels on a single



4-2

This Athearn ready-to-roll HO scale Mack B61 tractor is seen here with an Eastern Motor Express Freuhauf 32-foot trailer from Classic Metal Works.



4-3

George Micklus built this Mack Bulldog H60 cab-over-engine tractor from an Ulrich metal kit. He added an assortment of detail parts to the semi-trailer to match the prototype used by a New Jersey oil dealer.



4-4

An exhaust stack and other details have been added to this IH R-190 tractor from Classic Metal Works. Tractors are available in decorated and undecorated versions.



9-1

CHAPTER NINE

# Modeling Chicago's Dearborn Station

By Gary Hoover

**Chicago's Dearborn Station was old and small, but it was home to some of the most interesting trains in the nation, including the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe's *Super Chief*. Here, locomotives and buildings are illuminated for night operation, an important feature on my HO layout.**

Photos by the author

Imagine you're a traveler in the 1950s, making your first trip from sunny southern California to Chicago. You're on a luxury passenger train, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe's *Super Chief*, and the trip has been first-class all the way. As your gleaming stainless-steel sleeper picks its way through the maze of turnouts and double-slip switches leading into Chicago's Dearborn Station, **9-1**, you notice switchmen manually aligning the route and occasional small shelters that protect the workers during Chicago's bitter winters.

As your train rounds the curve and heads into Dearborn's trainshed, you pass a few nondescript brick warehouses and several battered covered platforms full of sacks, mail pouches, boxes, and just about everything else imaginable. You're thrilled to spot some Wabash and Erie E units. Then, a Chicago & Western Indiana RS-1 flashes by on the next track, doing some switching duties.

Suddenly, the brightness of day turns to shadows as the *Super Chief* enters a dimly lit trainshed and slows to a stop.

You disembark onto a well-worn wooden platform. Entering the main

station, you find that a short walk across the waiting room takes you through the main doors to Polk Street where a row of taxis are idling at the curb. You're surprised that such a luxurious trip has ended in such modest surroundings.

## The charm of Dearborn Station

Dearborn's dour Gothic architecture, hemmed in by gritty freight houses and loading docks, was hardly what one would expect to find when arriving on the *Super Chief* in the railroad capital of North America, **9-2**. Although the station lacked the elegance and comforts of neighboring Grand Central and LaSalle Street stations, Dearborn had a charm all its own. It's the vivid contrast between spotlessly clean passenger trains and their dingy port of call that makes modeling Dearborn Station in the 1950s so interesting, so challenging, and, above all, so rewarding.

Modeling Dearborn Station and its surrounding buildings is a mid-level project – it's not exactly easy, but it's not very hard either. You'll need some time and a bit of research as you won't find ready-to-build kits for the structures. Even your best kitbashed and

scratchbuilt buildings will probably be only good approximations due to the size of the prototype. Still, with a bit of patience and a dash of motivation, building an eye-catching Dearborn Station scene – or any complex city scene – is certainly possible.

Before tackling the actual construction of Dearborn Station, let's take a brief look at its history and note some of the distinct features of the 1950s that gave Dearborn its beloved, if slightly shabby, charm.

## Chicago's oldest and smallest

In 1883, Cyrus Eidlitz completed plans for Dearborn Station, a combination of German Romanesque and Gothic styles. Two years and a half-million dollars later, Dearborn Station opened its doors to passengers. From the mid-1880s until the last intercity train departed on April 30, 1971, the station served millions of travelers.

Dearborn was the smallest of the six major railroad stations that would be built in Chicago. Red brick formed the exterior of the station with moldings and trim made from red terra cotta. The distinctive covered trainshed, constructed from wrought-iron columns

and trusses and covered by a corrugated-iron roof, began at the back of the main station complex and ran 600 feet south with 10 tracks under cover. The Fred Harvey Co. lunch counter, dining room, and cocktail lounge were surely the crown jewels of the station. Here, travelers could relax while waiting for their trains and enjoy Harvey's world-famous cuisine.

Elsewhere in the station, travelers found the usual amenities such as ticket counters, baggage handlers, offices, and a newsstand, **9-3**. After World War II, a second-floor waiting room was added where large picture windows provided a view of the arriving and departing trains.

## Landlords and tenants

Santa Fe's elegant trains are so closely associated with Dearborn that one

**A warbonnet Santa Fe E6 and a handsome Wabash E7 provide a stark contrast to the otherwise gritty surroundings of Dearborn Station. The covered platform was scratchbuilt from Evergreen and Plastruct shapes using plans available from the Santa Fe Railway Historical & Modeling Society.**



9-2