

# MODEL RAILROAD SCENERY

## STEP BY STEP

### 4 HEY, HOW DID YOU DO THAT?

Introduction/by Hal Miller

### 5 CONTINUE YOUR ROADS INTO THE BACKDROP

Acrylic paints and a clever rise in the pavement blend roads into background photos/by Tom Johnson

### 9 DETAIL AND WEATHER AN ASSEMBLED STRUCTURE

A simple factory-assembled model can be the centerpiece of an interesting scene/by Pelle Søbørg

### 11 MODEL A CONCRETE LOT WITH EMBEDDED RAILS

Styrene sheet makes this project quick and easy/by Cody Grivno

### 14 BUILD A HIGHWAY OVERPASS

A simple solution for crossing a busy railroad/by Bruce Petty

### 16 MODEL A SCRAPYARD

This rail-served industry can fit in almost any small space on your layout/by Cody Grivno

### 19 UPDATE A COMMON WATER TOWER KIT

Scratchbuilt details customize this Atlas model/by Ron Foreman

### 24 HOW TO WEATHER AND STRING LINE POLES

Adding this realistic trackside detail to your layout is easier than you think/by Cody Grivno

### 27 DISGUISE A TUNNEL ENTRANCE WITH TREES

How to make a foliage canopy that conceals a turnback loop/by Steven Otte

### 30 MEADOWS MADE EASY

New techniques for modeling realistic ground cover/by Horst Meier

### 33 FROM BACKDROP TO BLACKTOP

Tips and tricks for adding background buildings and small-town streets/by Gerry Leone

### 38 CONIFERS FOR ALL OCCASIONS

Options for modeling pine trees on a layout/by David Popp

### 41 BUILD A DENSE FOREST

Combine two simple techniques for a great-looking eastern forest/by Tom Harris

### 44 CLEVER WAYS TO MODEL RUNDOWN STRUCTURES

Modeling techniques for achieving the dilapidated look/by Kathleen Renninger

### 48 HOW TO DETAIL YOUR STATION SCENES

A guide to realistic placement of figures, signs, and ancillary items/by V.S. Roseman

### 54 CAST YOUR OWN TUNNEL PORTAL

Alabaster plaster and a homemade plastic form were the answer/by Pelle Søbørg

### 57 GOOD FENCES MAKE GOOD SCENERY

Wooden kits can help divide scenes and make cramped areas seem larger/by Mike Tylick

### 59 MODIFYING AND PAINTING FIGURES

Add realism to your layout by varying its inhabitants/by Sam Swanson

### 63 DIG THOSE DITCHES

How to model realistic-looking trackside drainage ditches/by Tony Koester

### 68 HOW TO MAKE A DISTANT TREE LINE WITH SCUFF PADS

A strip of inexpensive scuff pad helps blend layout scenery into a backdrop/by Lance Mindheim

### 71 BUILD A BACKWOODS SCENE FOR YOUR LAYOUT

Turn a bland return loop into a scenic standout/by Gerry Leone

### 78 HOW TO MODEL MODERN ROOFS

3 easy techniques for making flat-roof model railroad structures look more realistic/by Lance Mindheim

**ON THE COVER:** There are lots of ways to add realistic detail to layouts of any size. Pelle Søbørg scratchbuilt this tunnel portal on his compact HO Union Pacific layout. See page 54. Photo by Pelle Søbørg







Evergreen trees contrast the fall foliage and add to the realistic scenery on David Popp's N scale Naugatuck Valley RR.

# CONIFERS FOR ALL OCCASIONS

Options for modeling pine trees on a layout

**BY DAVID POPP • PHOTOS BY BILL ZUBACK**

**YOU CAN NEVER HAVE TOO MANY** trees on a model railroad. Even a small layout can use hundreds. Though I'm modeling Connecticut in the fall, up to this point I've used only deciduous trees in autumn colors on my layout. However, to be true to the region, I also needed some conifers – more universally referred to as pine trees or evergreens, since they stay green all year. (Conifers have needles instead of leaves.)

I'd held off adding conifers to my N scale Naugatuck Valley RR for some time because I couldn't get past the thought of the "bottle brush" trees, common on the layouts of my childhood. These were made from a twisted wire trunk that had colored strands of coarse jute or plastic protruding from them. The model tree was then trimmed into a roughly conical evergreen tree shape. If viewed from some distance, they looked

fair at best, but any closer and the illusion was destroyed.

However, one glance at the Walther's catalog or website at [www.walthers.com](http://www.walthers.com) shows there's a lot more variety in model pine trees these days, and they're available as both ready-made trees and in kits. We'll take a look at several brands of ready-made conifers, as well as an easy-to-build tree kit. These trees would be a good fit for most layouts.



## READY-MADE PINES

**READY-MADE PINE TREES** have come a long way since the spindly bottle-brush trees of my youth. The photo shows some examples offered by Scenic Express, Timberline Scenery, and Woodland Scenics, but many other scenery manufactures, such as Noch, Faller, and JTT Trees, also sell conifers.

The blue spruce trees from Scenic Express are made from tiers of flexible-plastic branches attached to a plastic trunk. The branches are covered with a special type of pointed ground foam, giving the trees a more natural appearance. The Timberline pine trees are

essentially improved bottle-brush trees. These have wood trunks, and the branch strands are more naturally cut and are covered with ground foam, giving them a better appearance. The Woodland Scenics trees have plastic trunks with clusters of ground foam cemented to them. The foam has some variation in color, giving the effect of sun highlights.

Though the ready-made trees look fairly good straight out of the package, you can improve them by painting the shiny exposed parts of the plastic armatures. (I did this for my Woodland Scenics and Scenic Express trees.) As shown on the lower right tree, I painted

the trunk and lower branches with a base coat of Polly Scale Union Pacific Dark Gray. [Since Polly Scale paint is discontinued, a similar shade of Testor's Model Master paint would also work. – Ed.] I then highlighted the bark detail by lightly brushing CSX Tan over the gray once it dried.

Most of these ready-made model trees have a mounting pin of some sort on the trunk that makes them easy to “plant” on a layout. Simply drill a hole in the scenery's surface, put a drop of white glue on the tree's mounting pin, and insert the pin into the hole.



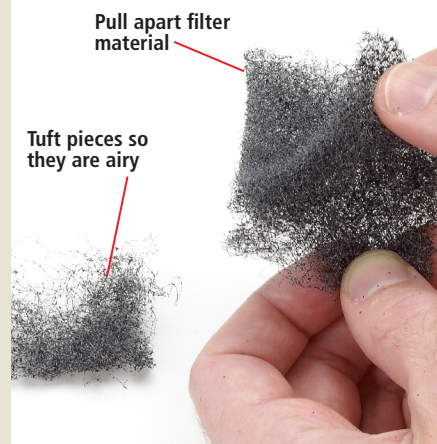
## STEP 1 ADDING BRANCHES

**WHILE READY-MADE TREES** can cover a lot of ground in a hurry, they're also often the most expensive option. Building trees from kits can save money. (Some companies, such as Woodland Scenics, offer both kits and ready-made trees.)

Conifer kits usually include stained wood trunks, poly fiber material for the branches, and ground-foam foliage to represent

the needles. The kits come in an assortment of sizes, are easy to build, and no two trees end up exactly the same. [David used Sweetwater Scenery conifer kits for his layout, but the firm has gone out of business since this article was first written. – Ed.]

Using a pair of scissors, start by cutting the poly fiber pad into small squares. This material is made up of interwoven layers (about four) and



## STEP 1 ADDING BRANCHES (CONT'D)

needs to be pulled apart, as shown in the previous photo. Once the pad is separated, pull smaller tufts from the layers and fluff them out a bit. These will form the tree branches.

The poly fiber branches slip onto the carved wood trunk. I placed a drop of white glue at the base to hold the first layer of branches in place; the others can simply slide down on top of them. Slip the tufts onto the trunk slightly off-center and

stagger them to give some variation to the branches of the tree. When you get to the top of the tree, place another drop of white glue on the point of the trunk to hold the uppermost tuft.

On my first batch of kit-built trees (shown in these photos), I used too many poly fiber branches, making my trees look too dense. On later trees I used fewer branches, giving the finished trees a more realistic open structure and airy appearance.

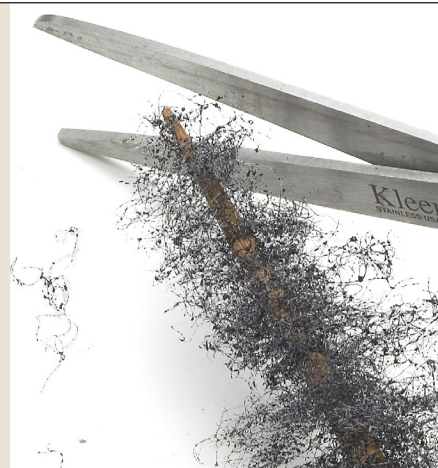


## STEP 2 TRIMMING THE FOLIAGE

**AFTER YOU'VE ATTACHED** the branches to several trees, you need to shape and trim them. To shape the branches, simply slide them around on the trunk, positioning them so they look natural. You can also pull the poly fiber apart as needed to fill in bare areas.

Once you're satisfied with the branch location, it's time to trim the tree. Using a pair of scissors, start

by clipping away any long stray fiber strands to make the tree look more pine-like. Next, to add definition to the layers of branches, clip away some of the tufted strands between the branches. This step will not only open up the tree, it will also help accentuate the distinct branch structure characteristic of pine trees.



## STEP 3 APPLYING NEEDLES

**THE FINAL STEP IN THE PROJECT** is to add the ground foam "needles" to the trees. The instructions in the kit suggest using hair spray for an adhesive, which will work just fine, but I used diluted matte medium (mixed 1 part matte medium to 5 parts water), since that's what

I use for my other tree projects. The mounting pin in the bottom of the trunk make the trees easy to hold during this step.

If you dunk the trees directly into the diluted matte medium, the poly fiber branches soak up too much liquid, causing them to sag and making something of a mess. (Yes, I found this out the hard way.) Instead, I poured the diluted matte medium into a misting bottle and sprayed the tree branches over a plastic-lined garbage can – a much neater solution. You want the poly fiber to be wet, but not soaked, with matte medium.

Next, sprinkle the ground foam onto the tree, making sure to work it into the spaces between the branches. As shown in the photo on the left, I applied the ground foam to the tree over an old kit box. This way the excess foam is easy to collect and reuse for the next batch of trees.



After applying the foam, I stuck the trees into a block of extruded-foam insulation board (shown in the photo above) to let them dry overnight. The next day I planted the trees on the layout. At last, conifers had come to Connecticut. **MR**



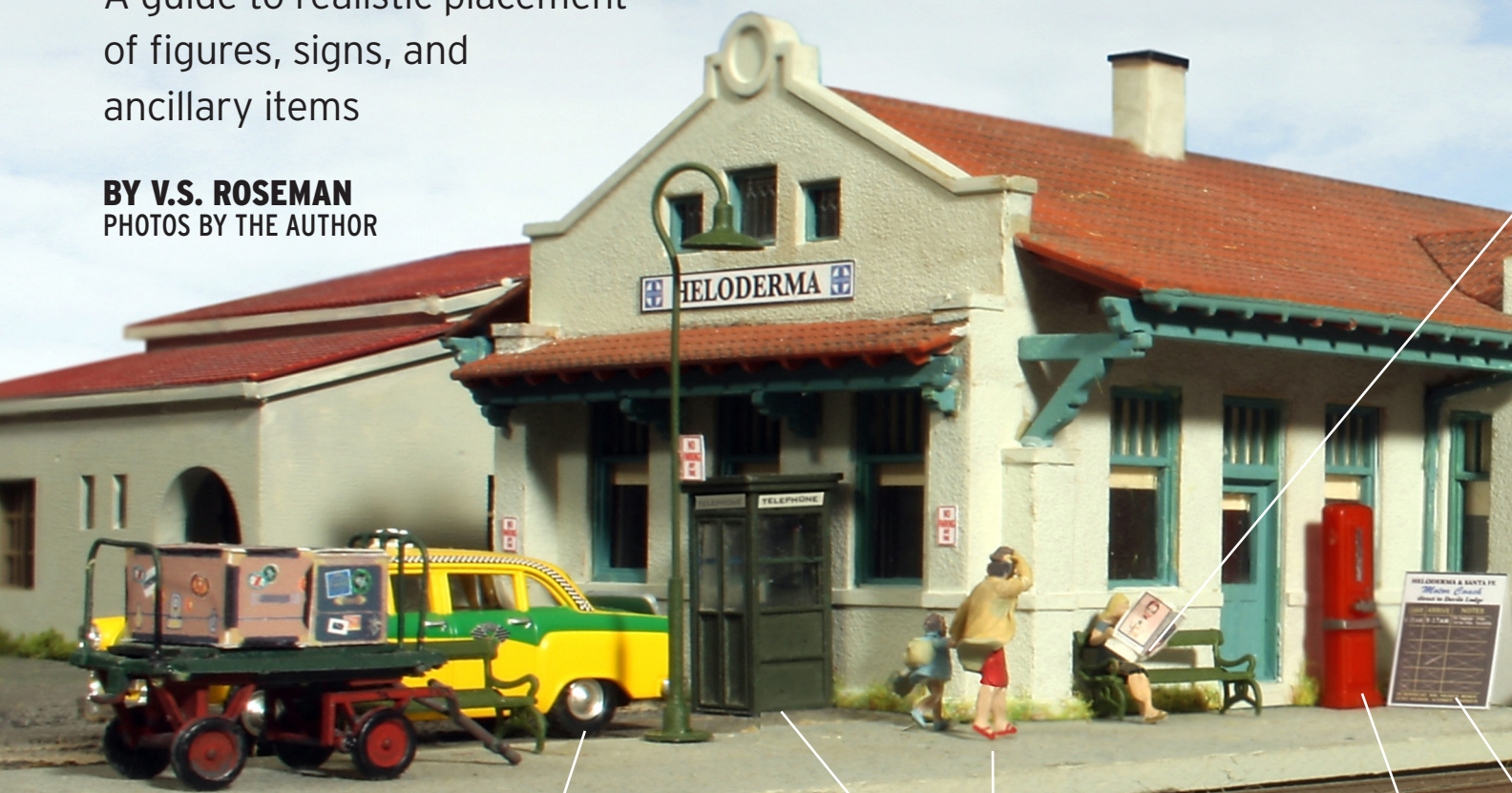
# HOW TO DETAIL YOUR STATION SCENES

A guide to realistic placement of figures, signs, and ancillary items

**BY V.S. ROSEMAN**  
PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

**PASSENGER STATIONS** add interest to a model railroad, and nearly every layout can potentially include one. There are many great commercial kits that make modeling stations easy, though to create an authentic scene the project requires more effort than simply placing a depot and platform next to the tracks. To realistically model a station as a central location of activity in a city or town on your layout, you'll want to include period-appropriate figures, signs, and posters, along with many other key details.

The following photographs and call-outs demonstrate how I've added these details to compose several realistic passenger station scenes.



## **ATHEARN NO. ATH26371**

Checker A8 taxi awaits passengers from the arriving train. Classic Metal Works and Sylvan Scale Models also offer HO scale taxis. Additional cab options, including those decorated in maroon or black fleet colors, are available in O and N scales, too.

## **I PAINTED A BACHMANN**

no. 44209 phone booth olive green. I also added computer-printed signs. Bachmann and Walthers booths are available in sets of HO scale railroad details. More contemporary phone shelters with side panels are also available in N, HO, and O scales.

## **CANDY MACHINE,** Peco no. LK21

**FIGURES POSED IN MOTION**, like this woman and child walking toward the train, are useful for representing action along the platform. However, figures in extreme action poses tend to appear artificial. Use figures in subtle poses so it isn't so obvious they aren't really moving.



# PLATFORM FIGURES

**THIS HO SCALE (1:87.1) WALTHERS** Cornerstone Series no. 933-2920 mission-style depot, patterned after a Santa Fe prototype, serves as the gateway to the fictitious community of Heloderma, N.M. Although the arriving single-coach local train doesn't draw as much attention as the celebrated *Chief*, the selection and arrangement of figures and details on the station platform help establish a sense of anticipation.

Other ideas for placing figures include a cab driver standing next to his taxi, a station agent standing on the platform, and passengers exiting from waiting room doors.

**A FEW PREISER** or Woodland Scenics figures seated on a bench reading newspapers or standing on the platform with luggage suggest that a train will be arriving soon.

**THE TELEGRAPH** sign is a scaled print of a photo.

## A BAGGAGE ROOM ATTENDANT

standing with a cart filled with sacks and boxes denotes the arrival of a train. Note that a load of mail or express freight often has one or more handlers nearby.

**A SANDWICH SIGN** displays connecting local and long-distance bus schedules. Classic Metal Works and Athearn sell HO scale buses suitable for modeling the 1950s. Rapido sells HO 1960s to 1980s buses while Busch has more contemporary offerings. Athearn has N scale buses, too.

**BAGGAGE** scale, Peco no. LK22

**BISHOPS CROOK LAMPS** can be modeled by bending a piece of .024" brass wire (2" diameter in HO scale) into a hook 2 scale feet wide. Use a no. 73 bit to drill the center of a Tichy no. 8027 reflector and insert the wire to make a simple HO scale lamp.

**TRASH CAN,** Funaro & Camerlengo no. 605





# STATION AND PLATFORM DETAILS

**I BUILT MY O SCALE** (1:48) Hunterdon Junction commuter station to resemble a depot typically found in the eastern United States. The choice of trim colors, the placement of platform canopies, the type of advertising posters, and other station details can help define a particular period or setting for your station.

**TO MAKE CONTEMPORARY POSTERS,** photograph real ads displayed at train or bus stations. Reduce prints of these posters to scale using a color copier or computer image-processing software. Vintage posters are available in old magazines or through online sources. Several model railroad suppliers, such as Blair Line, JL Innovative Design, and others, offer printed sheets of posters in various scales.

## ADVERTISING POSTERS

on platform posts, fences, and station walls promote both local and national businesses and products. Posters are hung in frames, which today can be tan, silver or black. In the past, frames were wood and often painted maroon, dark green, or a color to match the station trim. I tend to make my advertising space 3 x 6 scale feet.

**MAKE AN O SCALE** wooden lamppost using .125" square styrene cut to 1¾" high. Attach a wire lamp arm near the top of the post. Glue a button to the wire to represent an O scale shade.





### **RAILROADS GENERALLY PICKED**

uniform color schemes for their structures, including stations, trackside sheds, and interlocking towers. For example, the Lehigh Valley RR painted its stations gray, Reading Co. used tan and cream, and Central RR of New Jersey used medium and light green on its structures.



**RAILROADS GAIN EXTRA REVENUE** by selling space on platforms for advertisements like these.



**TALL POSTERS**, mounted vertically in aluminum, stainless steel, or black painted metal frames, are displayed on modern station platforms.



**MAKE YOUR OWN STATION SIGNS** with the aid of word processing or graphics software on a computer. You can also scan photos of more elaborate signs and reproduce them using a color printer. The signs I make are typically 12" tall with 6" letters. Some small station signs are posted on fences or lampposts.

**A STATION CANOPY** will make your station appear larger without actually using much space. These canopies don't even need to match the station, as they were often added years after the original structures.