

THE UNPROTOTYPE & SCENYKED HARBOR RAILROAD

by: Gerri Doebelin

The Unprototype & Seenyked Harbor Railroad is a free-lanced, very detailed, weathered, walk-in, HO steam short line of the late 1930's. It has mountains, harbors, mines, curves, steep grades, and over 100 buildings. I had tom down my 10-year-old, neglected layout that I was dissatisfied with in December 1987. After reading "how-to" books and modeling magazines for three months, I designed a plan and started the benchwork. I still had never seen anyone's home layout; if I had, I would not have a mainline with 7% grades! My husband Ernie, who is not a modeler, helped me with the benchwork for my 12.5' x 20' pike whenever more than two hands were needed. He also built my two control panels, one utilizing DPDT toggles with MRC dual cab control; the other has Atlas components. Other than this, all layout planning, construction, and development is my own work.

There is a single mainline with many sidings for continuous running. Atlas code 100 nickel-silver flex track, turnouts, snap relays, plus two additional MRC power packs were used. It is a one-person operation. The snap controls at the turnouts are covered with scenery material to hide them as much as possible. There is also an MRC sound system. A mirror mounted at one end of the room, next to the ceiling, provides good viewing from the control center.

The rolling stock is mainly MDC old-time 36'-40' cars. Some are wooden craftsman kits because I wanted a consist of Colorado Midland RR cars. Over 300 people plus animals live in an imaginary world with 31 vehicles (mainly Jordan models). The 110 buildings were selected for shape and compatibility with the theme. Thirty-nine of the structures are Campbell kits. The rest are mainly craftsman kits, and all are weathered with artist's chawks.

Construction (be it kits, track laying, or scenery) and running trains through realistic surroundings is probably the favorite part of this hobby for me. I guess that covers everything except "operation", which I'm not really into. The mountains and scenery were constructed of double heavy paper towels dipped in Hydrocal and placed over wire, wood, crumpled newspaper, masking tape, or whatever would work. I made latex molds from rock shapes and these were filled with casting plaster, and immediately applied to the mountainside. This was all painted with artist's paint washes. Some rock shapes were hand-carved. Sculptamold was used in many places. In fact, a thin layer covers all flat surfaces of plywood, foam, or homasote. All flat wood surfaces had also been painted with house latex to protect the wood from the wet, while building scenery. Areas are either open benchwork, plywood, foam, or plywood covered with homasote. The edges of the layout are covered with 1x3 wood that I covered with Sculptamold as if icing a cake, and then painted with scenery washes. The legs of the layout are stained walnut. The only thing under the layout, besides carpet, is a G-scale train set, no scenery, just some track. Hundreds of photos were taken during construction. It is now fun to look back at the "before and after" and to see what is under all that scenery!

The backdrop is painted Masonite. I first applied artist's Gesso to create a "tooth", followed by latex paint and clouds. I used "Instant Horizons" with the sky cut away with an Exacto knife. After gluing this to the Masonite, it was toned down with an acrylic wash. Many Woodland Scenic products were used for landscaping, along with natural gravel from Colorado and red dirt from West Virginia. The lumps made some great rocks. There are over 400 trees, which are either kits, purchased ready-made from K&S, or from backyard shrubs and plants.

I have wired some 30 buildings for light. Great care must be taken with lighted buildings in that the structure must be well "planted" into the landscape, and all joints must be tight and sealed. The grain-of-wheat bulbs were mounted on plastic or copper tubing and secured under the buildings. The outdoor yard lights were built from scratch.

I'm a former operating-room supervisor (retired in 1958). Former hobbies include oil painting and needle crafts. Currently I am an avid hosta gardener, birder, and have been a volunteer Docent at the Columbus Zoo for 23 years. Although I model in HO, the many trips to Colorado, exploring the abandoned railroad beds, reinforced my interest in that state's railroad history. Modeling a fictitious railroad has allowed me to build both scenery and structures to my liking. Having a variety of locomotives adds to the fun of the hobby.

I have always had an interest in trains and, like many others, received a Lionel train set when I was seven. I was also able to watch steam trains from my grandparents' home. In the late 1940's and the early 1950's I frequently rode the NYC in Ohio. Twice I rode the PRR around the famous horseshoe curve in 1952 and it was unforgettable. Through modeling I have become a railroad history buff. I collect and enjoy reading railroad books, especially about Colorado. I feel fortunate to include in my 316 books the 1976 "William Henry Jackson's Rocky Mountain Railroad Album".

When I started this layout, I was going to run mainly geared locomotives and Consolidations. This changed when I found that I could also run a Berkshire and a Cab-Forward on the tight curves. What a joy! I am able to run the newer Consolidations, Mother Hubbards, and Pacifics with a decent consist if I doublehead. This is logical for such grades; it is a fictitious railroad. I now have a nice mixture of motive power in the 17 locomotives. All the brass engines were painted by the well-known modeler, Dr. Harry Sage, Jr. (MMR).

In building the Seenyked Harbor area, a "must have" were the components of Campbell's "Norm's Landing". The harbor retaining walls are scratch built from wood, pebbles gathered from Moonstone Cove (near Carmel, California), and wood made to look like large stone blocks by indenting with a ball-peen hammer. People are busy on the pier and waiting on the boat dock as rowboats and a tugboat come into the harbor. The tugboat is a kit by Sheep- soot Scale Products. The water is painted using artist's acrylic paint and the gloss medium technique. Overlooking the harbor are many businesses: King's Cannery, Depot, Lumber Co., water tower, Montgomery Feed & Seed Co., Ayres Chairs, Grain Elevator, Ophir General Store (Banta) and a Produce Warehouse displaying its fruits and vegetables. Many people are included in this scene. Three homes were built close by, representing three types of architecture from Timberline Scale Products, all with people and dogs. A Heisler nearby has a load of wood on the wharf. Nearby is a Cordage Co. Mountains and trees are a backdrop here and we pass a large mountain with a tunnel cave- in at the portal (deliberately trashed to eliminate an unwanted curved turnout). Warning signs and barriers are present. A favorite locomotive, a 2-6-6-2 Sierra, is stopped at the water tank.

Nestled into the mountains beyond the harbor is a community with a Grist Mill, stream to a falls, Bret's Brewery, Kee Ling Laundry and a farm house with fenced horses, and clothes being hung on a wash line. There is even a still, hidden behind the trees. A heavy horsedrawn beer wagon has just left the brewery. Many evergreen and aspen trees dot the area. Near the deep gorge, hobos are warming themselves around a fire. The LACE HOUSE (BIS) was built overlooking the same gorge. As the train moves under the long, scratch-built, stone pier viaduct, Grandma's house is seen. The family is in costume to attend a celebration. This area with Grandma's house and lake is removable for track access. From the lake by the house can be seen lumber being

unloaded at Frederick J. Hamilton's Dinghies Ltd. People are picnicking and enjoying a rowboat ride. From under the bridge comes a small tugboat.

Passing by a row of houses, and businesses, the train goes by Quick's Coal, the Talc Factory, and on a rise is the James Ruisinger Co. Be sure to look to your right to see the Tidewater Wharf with fishermen, and people talking on the wharf. My husband built me a flasher for the lighthouse. I enlarged the area of this kit (BIS) by building a larger wharf and more retaining walls. The backdrop here is from multi-layered magazine pictures, again dulling it with a wash. This whole wharf area is built on foam and is removable as a unit. The lobster and fishing boats are kits from J. D. Innovations.

A Western Maryland Shay is near the water and is headed for McCabe's Engine Facility (Master Creations). This was the last Shay built by Lima in 1945 and is not of my 1930's era. It was a gift from my brother. The Ruisinger Co., a Mainline & Siding structure, has three active oil wells with Jenson pumps. Plumbers at the Wardell Stubblefield Well and Pump Supply (a T.R.C kit) are loading trucks; an Iron Foundry and Schrock Meat Co. (with its own stockyards) are nearby.

Looking to the left are the tall mountains with the Silver Spur Mine and tunnel. Two Shays are awaiting their loads of ore. Piles of tailings pollute the land and the runoff is noted. Other small buildings are in the areas. Here are located many sidings. Before starting up the steep grade (about 7%) the Ophir depot (Banta) is passed, where the train riders can take down upon a busy mountain town. There are twenty-five structures here. The curving grade climbs up and over a short bridge and then over the long viaduct. This is the high point of the grade. At this point it goes through a long mountain tunnel, open on one side with a trouble light inside. It can continue around a curve toward Scenyked Harbor, or straight to the yard, turntable, and engine facilities.

The Idaho Springs Mine and Section House are passed, along with Campbell Supply Co., Globe News, Freight Station, Freytag Furnace, Roy's Fix It, Cuttings Scissor Co., Heinz Pickle Factory, Cambria City Iron Works, Averill Gold Refining, Co-op Creamery, Signal Tower, Mrs. Skillen's store (Banta), Cabinet Makers Shop, Coaling Tower, Sand House, Getz Gas (BIS), engine house and turntable. The largest structure on the layout is located here: Fanny Schwahn's Candy Factory (a kit by Master Creations).

After passing the last mine, the mountains have flattened out and the yards are seen. The aisle here is narrow, only 19 inches (I wanted more holding tracks). As many other modelers have found, we would like the line to continue... ah, space! This is a fun and rewarding hobby. I was new to the NMRA when people from all parts of the world came to see my layout during the 1992 NMRA 'Discoverail' in Columbus. I felt very proud of my accomplishments as I talked with very interesting people about our mutual interest in model railroading. Conversation is never at a loss when one meets another model railroader. Today the layout is larger, more buildings, more trees, and more locomotives; that gives more fun!