

FLIMZIE

**The Newsletter of the Rock River Valley Division
Midwest Region, National Model Railroad Association**



Sept 2022 Volume 56, Number 1

The Rock River Valley Division, RRVD, is a local division of the Midwest Region of the National Model Railroad Association, NMRA. The RRVD serves NMRA members in areas of Green and Rock Counties of Wisconsin, and Boone, Jo Davies, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, Whiteside, Carol, DeKalb and Winnebago counties in Illinois. The RRVD holds monthly meets typically the first Sunday afternoon of each month, September through May, in Rockford at the at **The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, 1829 North Rockton Avenue, Rockford, IL**. They consist of various clinics on model railroading, model contests, drawings for door prizes for NMRA members. The meets start at 1:00 PM, and the doors open at 12:30 PM.

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Flimzie Deadlines

The Flimzie is published once per month on the first of the month. It will be placed on the RRVD website for anyone that wants to read it.

The content for the Flimzie comes from you, our readers. Please submit your articles, pictures and editorial comments to the Editor, Ken Peterson, poplarken53@gmail.com, no later than 10 days before the 1st of the month, i.e., Sept 21, 2022, for an Oct 1st publication.

Message From the Superintendent

By Marty Hendrickx

None this month.

The Layout Design Column

By Ken Peterson

This month I will discuss the structural phase of the **Plainfield Lines** design. This will be where the track schematic is developed. The schematic will determine which scenes will be used. The track standards will be chosen/specified.

Structural Phase

As far as I know, there isn't a prototype railroad that runs trains around in circles. They carry freight from point A to point B. The original **P-Line** operated from Stevens Point to Portage and back. So, my **Plainfield Lines** was going to operate as a direct point to point from Portage to Stevens Point. Originally, I used staging to represent Portage and Stevens Point. After I built the railroad, I wanted to have a working yard, so I re-built the Portage staging

into a yard. It can operate as a staging yard or a working yard. The original **P-Line** had a small yard at Portage where it interchanged with the Milwaukee Road. As I stated last month, my **Plainfield Lines** operates in 1988.

I model in N-scale. For ease in construction, and ease in moving it, I designed the layout in 16" x 8' long modules (there are some 16" x 4' long and some odd sized modules for specific locations). I chose a depth of 16" so I could cut a 4' x 8' sheet of plywood into three pieces for the module tops. I used 1 x 3's to create a box frame, fastened 1/4" plywood on top, added a 1/4" thick Masonite backdrop and used 2 x 2's for the legs with 1 x 2's for the cross-bracing. One-inch-thick pink foam went on top of the plywood. This provided a strong base that has held up over 20 years and three moves. The first modules were built in 2002. They were moved from Mukwonago, WI to St Louis, MO then to Poplar Grove, IL and finally to Roscoe, IL. The first two moves were in moving vans. Both moving companies were very good to the modules and there was no damage from the moves. The final move was in my Dodge Caravan. Each move involved design modifications and the addition of more modules. If I were to tear this down to build a new layout, I would use this construction method again.

Our current house has provided the largest space for the railroad. The space for this final version is about 16'-6" x 52'-9". There is an alcove area providing an additional 4'-4" x 11'-8" off the 52 ft wall. I was able to fit a branch line to Consolidated Papers. **See Figure 1.**

One of my "Givens" required for this latest version was long distances between towns. I wanted at least two 8 ft modules of nothing but Wisconsin farmland between towns (in N-scale a typical 10-car train is less than 48" long). I was able to achieve that with this layout configuration. It provides about 250 linear ft of point-to-point railroad.

For overhead lighting I used contractor work light strings, 100 ft cords with 10 light holders and guards. I have four strings and use 13-watt LED bulbs to keep the electrical bills down. I built a fascia above the layout to direct the light down on the layout. All lighting is run through a single switch. After operating for several years, I have found several "dark" spots in the layout lighting. I may add more lighting or change out some of the bulbs to higher wattage. Another possibility is to re-space the bulbs.

The track components are Atlas Code 80 laid on cork roadbed. If I were to start over now, I would use PECO Code 55 with Unifrog turnouts. They are more expensive but are rugged and flawless. I have used them on the last couple of portable layouts I have built to take to train shows.

Another "Given" in my design was 17" minimum radius on the mainline and #6 turnouts. There are two spurs where I cheated on that minimum radius

and my big motive power will operate on them, but they do not look good on those curves.

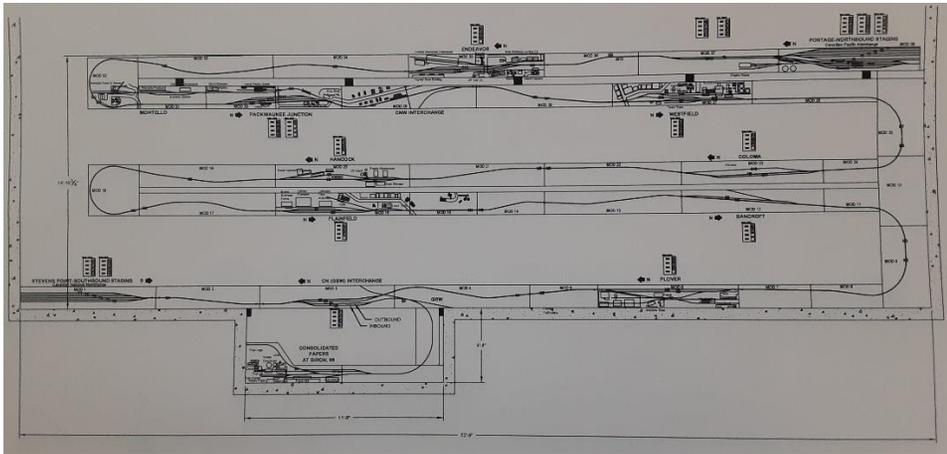


Figure 1 Plainfield Lines Map

Another “Given” is DC control. I am a “lone wolf” operator and do not have a need for DCC powered locomotives. At most there will only be two trains operating at a time. It is a short line and there are no double headed trains.

The original **P-Line** ran two trains daily. They went from Stevens Point southbound Monday/Wednesday/Friday and northbound Tuesday/Thursday/Saturday. The **Plainfield Lines** has thirteen trains that operate sequentially. Some trains are run-throughs and only take 10 – 15 minutes to run end-to-end. Other trains take hours to complete the work they are required to do. The layout is wired for two cabs of DC. Each throttle is radio controlled so the engineer walks along side of his train. With the two cabs, two engineer/conductor crews can operate one southbound, and the other northbound, easily staying out of each other’s way.

I have built train storage shelves under the staging yards that hold additional trains. This allows me to swap out trains, so every operating session is new and fresh.

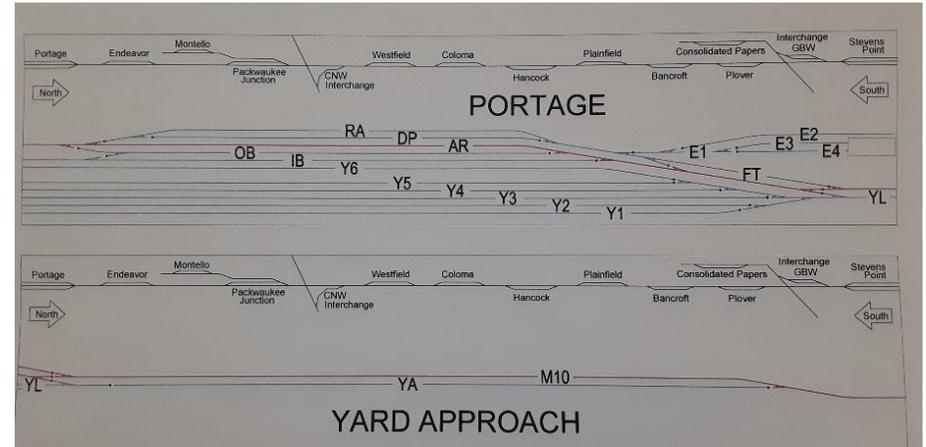


Figure 2 Portage Yard Schematic



Figure 3 Portage Yard-looking northbound



Figure 4 Portage Yard-looking southbound

Next month I will show pictures and schematics of the layout and describe the final design.

Making a Silk Purse – Part 5

By Ken Mosny

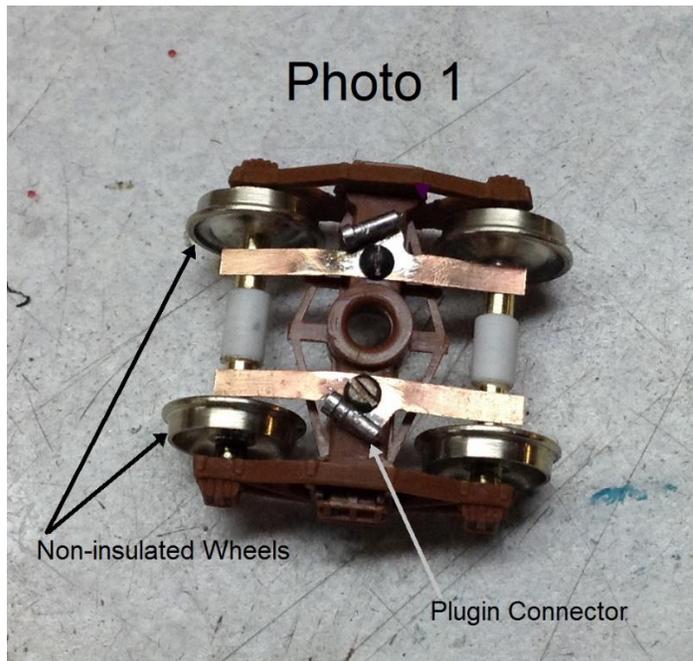
Modern model DCC steam locomotives are well past the simple wiring of a single wire connecting the tender to a terminal on the motor and maybe another to the headlight. Add sound to the mix with a speaker and capacitor in addition to a decoder, a headlight, rear light and whatever other effects that you can think of, and the quantity of wires increases several fold. Unless you are a dead railer with batteries on board, reliable wheel pickup becomes more critical than ever. Decoders and sound systems don't like the power interrupted. Analog DC locomotives could coast through minor power glitches and keep on going without a whimper. DCC with sound, not so much. This MDC 0-6-0 will need serious upgrades to the electrical system for sound to work well.

I use a type of socket clipped from a strip called a "machine tooled strip socket" for sockets as described in the *Get Wired* clinic handout [[Click Here](#)]. They are dirt cheap, a few cents apiece and readily available. I don't know

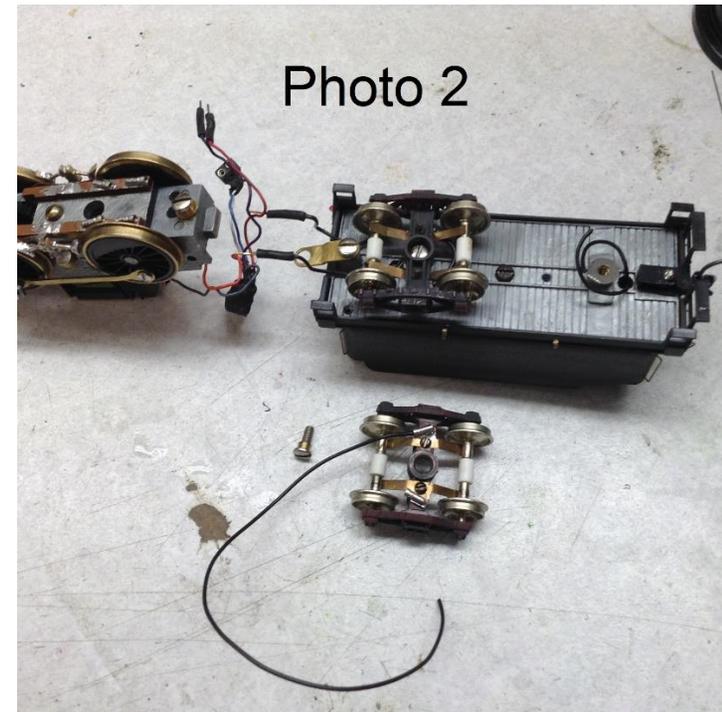
how much current it takes to damage them, but I am pretty sure the one ampere plus of an old open frame motor will. I have used them with can motors typically found in HO locomotives drawing 0.20-0.30 amperes and they work fine. I suspect they are OK up to 0.50 amperes. Certainly, a short through them from a typical DCC power supply will destroy them.

Let's start with the drivers. This locomotive, like all diecast ones of the era, has a rigid frame without the drivers being equalized in some manor to adjust to uneven track. This means that effectively only three of the six drivers, one on one side and two on the other, will be reliably in contact with the rails at a time. The locomotive constantly rocks selecting which three drivers touch the rails. The only way more than three drivers can have good contact with the rail is if everything is nearly perfect. The track would have to be very level, the drivers all exactly the same size, the locomotive frame straight, axle slots all of equal depth and so forth. No way. Additionally, only the drivers on the non-insulated side are electrically used in the original wiring of this 0-6-0. The other side is insulated and about half the time two of the three drivers in contact with the rail will be on the insulated side leaving only one driver on the other side actually conducting current to the locomotive. A bit of dirt, dead frog, or other glitch with that single driver will cause a stall. The odds are against good performance.

While I have a concept for a fairly easy way to equalize, i.e. spring, drivers on this locomotive, I have not tried it. That may be a future project for a tank style locomotive. I have found the easiest way to improve the electrical pickup is to rely primarily on the tender trucks. If you want to do one thing to improve the wheel pickup on a steam locomotive, install all wheel pickup tender trucks. Use all wheel wipers, equalized tender trucks, non-tarnishing wheels (solid nickel silver, or nickel plated), hard wired conduction and a well weighted tender. This will ensure that you can have eight wheels in contact with the rails most of the time. That is much better odds for reliable pickup. **Photo 1** and **photo 2** show these trucks and how they are mounted.



I wrote an article for the winter 2015 *Flimzie* [click here](#) detailing how to make these trucks so I will only add some additional thoughts here.



The solid plastic tender trucks like those that come with the later MDC kits, are the most readily available and can be used if you don't have plastic sprung trucks. Many people do not like sprung trucks because they can require work to get them to equalize properly. It is important that the parts slide freely and that all the springs are the same and not deformed. Springs are frequently launched across the room during assembly so they can be frustrating to put together for those of us with only two hands. The trucks must sit level and square. Solid trucks with needle point axles do equalize somewhat. As the wheelsets slide side to side axially in the truck a little, the axle tips ride up and down in the side frame cones causing the wheelsets to tilt slightly. This effect is not nearly as good as equalized trucks, but if your track is very level, it may be good enough. Equalizing the wheels for this pickup truck is very important to keep all the wheels in electrical contact with the rails.

The article in the *Flimzie* also describes how to make the wheelsets by soldering solid nickel silver wheels to the axles. To make these trucks, none of the wheels are insulated from the axles. The insulation is from the plastic sleeve in the center joining the axle halves. I have never had a problem with the axle halves touching causing a short. The saw kerf plus a little dressing with a file is enough of a gap between the axle ends to keep

from shorting. You can buy 3/32" bore nickel silver wheels from NWSL and assemble them yourself using 3/32" diameter brass axles salvaged from plastic wheelsets. Make sure the length of the axle is the same as than that of the original for your truck.

If you are satisfied with nickel plated brass rather than solid nickel silver wheels, Intermountain is a good choice. If you use a highly efficient low current motor, nickel plated wheels resist pitting because there is little, if any arcing. No pitting means no abrasive cleaning to damage the plating. If the plating does get pitted, they are relatively cheap and easy to replace. Do not clean nickel plated wheels with abrasive or a wire brush like a Kaydee cleaner. That only wears off the plating. Do not use diecast zinc wheels, they oxidize, and, of course, they must have a metal axle. Carefully mark the center of the axle of an Intermountain wheelset and saw it in half. Cradling the wheelset in a vice make this easy, **photo 3**.



Dress the cut end with a file and chamfer the sharp edge, **photo 4**.



Photo 4

If you do not have access to a lathe, it can be done by hand. I keep an old drill chuck on my bench for holding round parts like these while filing or other work. Enlarge the ID of 1/8" diameter Evergreen styrene tubing with a 3/32" drill, **photo 5**.



Photo 5

This also can be done by hand. Finally, the non-insulated halves are joined by pressing them into the sleeve and the wheel gauge is adjusted, **photo 6**.

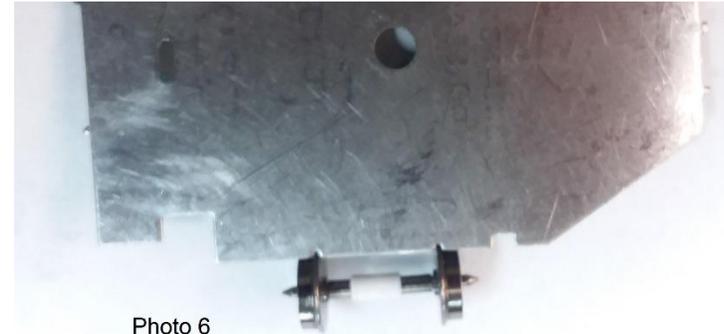
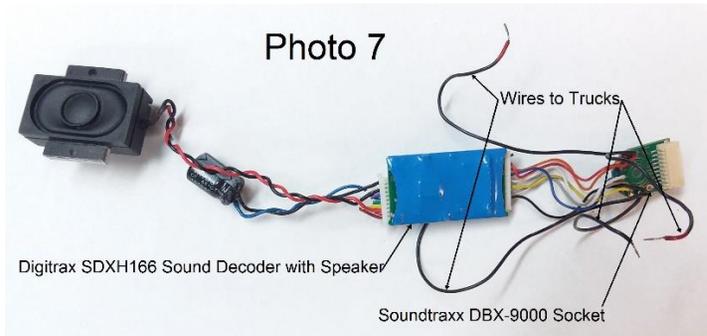


Photo 6

Roll the wheelset across the bench to verify they don't wobble. The *Flimzie* article mentions using CA in the sleeve. I do not use this anymore. The CA can soften the Evergreen styrene tube which results in a crooked axle that has to then be made over. I find CA isn't needed as the axles lightly press into the sleeves.

I make the wipers from 0.005" thick scraps of bronze weatherstrip that I have, but bronze weatherstrip seems to be getting hard to find. I saw only brass weatherstrip in stores which may work. From hobby suppliers, K&S makes 0.008" thick bronze sheet which seems a little stiff and Clover House has 0.003". A quick check of AliExpress and eBay found 0.10mm [0.004"] and 0.15mm [0.006"] in small quantities. I print the wiper patterns on mailing labels which easily peels and sticks to the bronze sheet. Here is a link to my pattern [[Click Here](#)] which uses the free Avery Design and Print Program to print on Avery labels or just plain paper that can be affixed with double sided tape. I can give you some printed on labels at an RRVD meet if you want to email me. A detailed description on how to punch the wipers can be found in the March 2022 *Flimzie* article "Punching your Models" [[Click Here](#)].

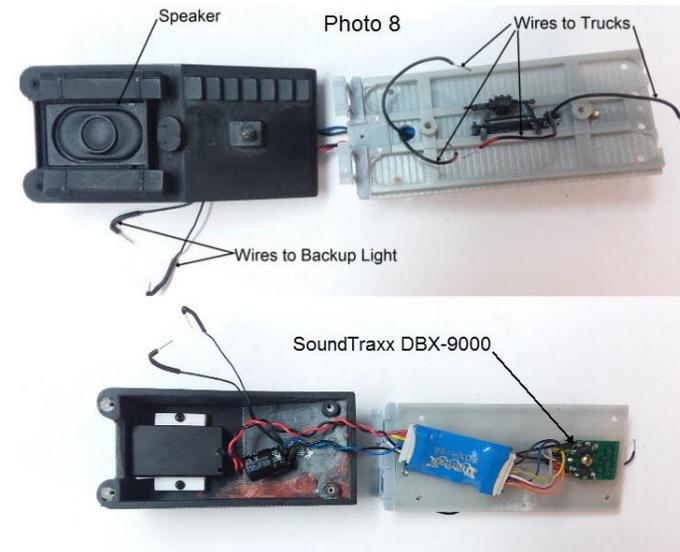
These trucks feature a socket to plug the wires into. You can just solder the wires to the wipers, but I prefer the plugin connectors because the trucks can be easily removed for maintenance. The wires that plug into the machine tooled strip sockets are #28 7x36 stranded PVC coated wire, a standard type of wire. If you tin the ends, they will plug into the truck sockets nicely. **Photo 7** shows the tender wiring harness with the sound decoder.



The decoder wires and truck wires are soldered to a SoundTraxx DBX-9000 socket PC board which provides up to nine connections between the locomotive and tender. Of the nine, I am using only six, two for track power, two for motor power and two for the headlight. Note that two of the truck wires have ends painted red to designate the right rail usage.

I chose the Digitrax SDHX166 sound decoder for two reasons. First, it is one of the least expensive sound decoders on the market and second, it came with a rectangular enclosed speaker that is a perfect fit in the coal bunker I fabricated for this tender. I do not care for the preloaded steam sounds, but Digitrax provides the software so you can change it yourself using a PR4 USB to LocoNet Interface. The SoundTraxx DBX-9000 connector at \$16.00, is expensive, in my opinion, but I like the small size for more connections than I will ever need and fairly low plug insertion force. There are Chinese knockoffs of these on AliExpress for about \$5.50, but they are larger in size. They would not fit in a small tender such as this but would be suitable for larger scale tenders and long-haul type HO tenders.

Photo 8 shows the electronics mounted in the tender.



Blocks of styrene were glued to the sides of the speaker for mounting with #0 sheet metal screws.

Photo 9

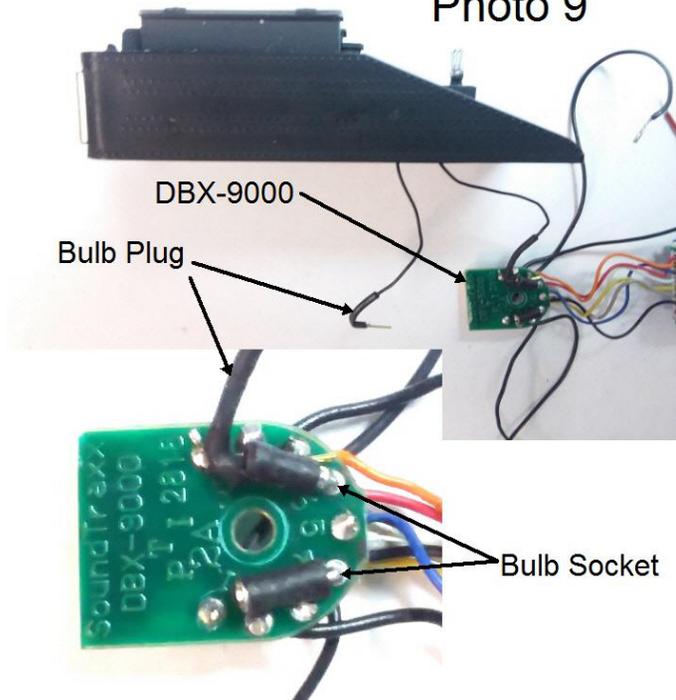
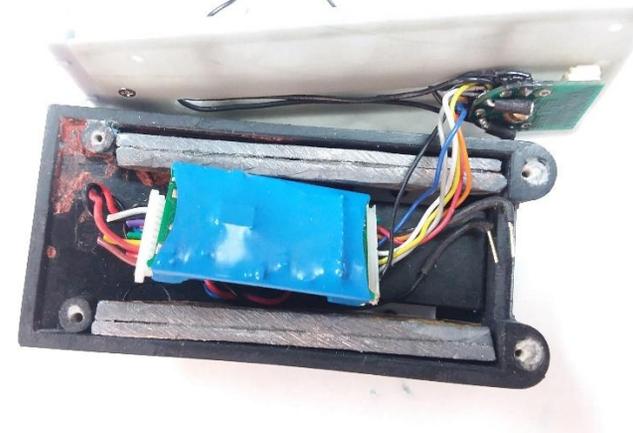


Photo 9 shows the Minitronics bulb backup light glued in the tender and the bulb sockets soldered to the DBX-9000. Lengths of 0.019" diameter brass wire soldered to the ends of the bulb wires are the plugs and the sockets are the machine tooled sockets described in the handout for my *Get Wired* clinic [[Click Here](#)]. About 1.5mm diameter heat shrink tubing is used as a strain relief. Plugging in the bulb wires allows the tender shell to be easily separated from the wiring after the speaker is unscrewed. After adding the two lead weights along the sides of the tender, it is very confined inside shown in **photo 10**.

Photo 10



It is so tight that I had to add a groove in the tender floor to make room for the two rear truck wires.

The trucks are mounted with #2-56 shoulder screws. Tender trucks are removed and replaced often. A shoulder screw is better in this application than a simple screw. It pivots more precisely, remains tight and has a built-in swivel clearance. You can buy suitable screws from McMaster-Carr and others, but they are easy to make. **Photo 11** shows this.

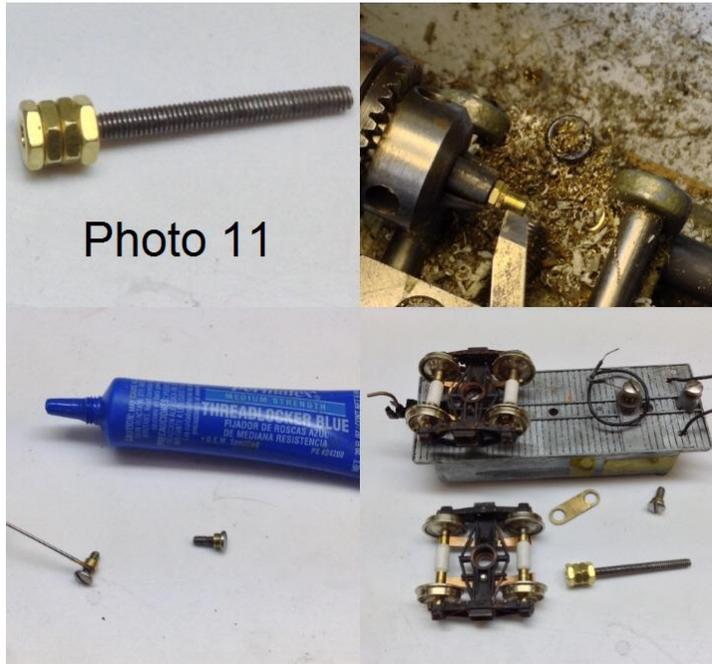


Photo 11

Tighten some 2-56 brass nuts on a length of threaded rod. Make several at one time because you can turn a whole stack in the time it takes to make one. Turn the nuts to 0.125" or some convenient diameter. This could be done with a drill press and file if you don't have access to a lathe. Loctite one of the threaded barrels onto a 2-56 x 1/4 binding head screw after determining its correct position to allow the truck to swivel freely when the barrel shoulder is seated on the bolster. I have found the shoulder length provided by a single nut is fine for HO truck and drawbar screws. The sleeve can be adjusted on the screw within limits for the required shoulder length or more than one sleeve used for longer shoulders, if needed. Note how the wires in photo 11 go around the bolster one half turn before plugging into the truck to allow the truck to swivel freely.

On the locomotive, wipers rub the back of the driver tires for electrical pickup. Remember that all the drivers are insulated so this 0-6-0 will need six wipers. The *Get Wired* clinic handout also shows how to make these from the same phosphor bronze as the truck wipers. On a small driver locomotive such as this switcher, the cover plate must be made from a PC board so the wipers can be soldered to it. There is not enough room for a separate PC board and wipers between the cover plate and the rails. On locomotives with larger drivers, strips of PC board for mounting the wipers can be glued with E6000 or epoxy to the existing cover plate. Note that the same sockets are used here as for the tender bulb wires to allow the cover plate to be unplugged and completely removed.

The machine tooled sockets are also soldered to the motor terminals. **Photo 12** shows the sockets glued to the top of the motor with E6000 adhesive with wires leading to the motor terminals.

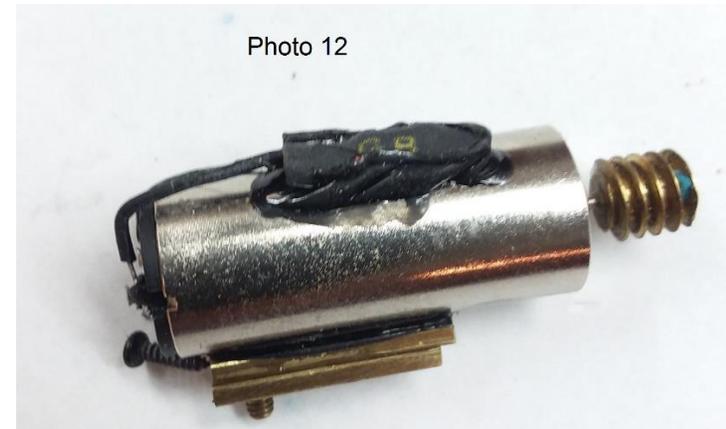
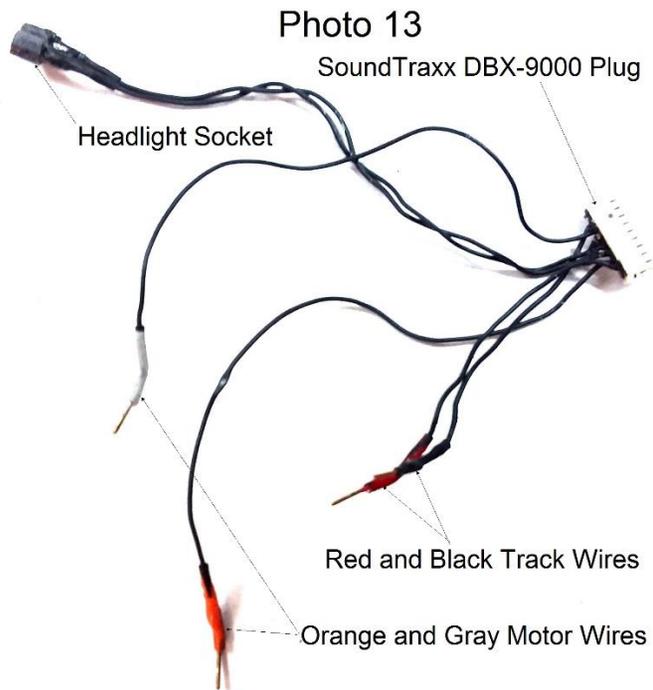


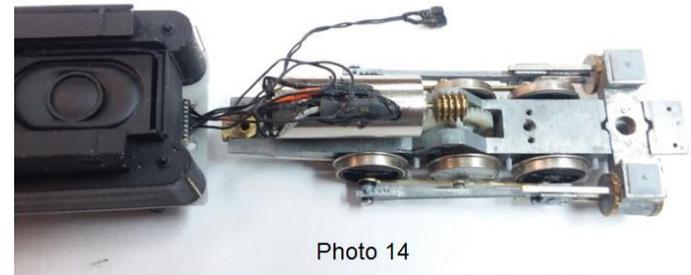
Photo 12

With the 30mm long motor used here, there is not enough space between the end of the motor and the boiler back head to solder the sockets directly to the motor terminals as I usually do. Also, there is a 22-ohm resistor in series with one of the motor leads. I have found that this additional resistance improves the starting performance of some decoders driving coreless motors, so I just use it with all coreless motor drives.

Photo 13 shows the entire locomotive wiring harness.



Note the colors painted on some of the wires so they are plugged in correctly. Decoders can be instantly destroyed if some of these wires are incorrectly connected, and the power applied. Don't ask me how I know this. They are the standard NMRA colors. Orange and gray for the motor, red and black for the track. If you paint orange and gray dots on the motor terminals after you determine the correct direction of rotation, the locomotive will always travel the correct direction. All these wires come already attached to DBX-9000 plug. Cut them to length carefully as you connect them so that there isn't too much of a nest of wires under the shell. The wires for plugs have pieces of 0.019" brass wire soldered to the ends to plug into the sockets. My *Get Wired* clinic handout [[Click Here](#)] describes making these plugs. **Photo 14** shows this wiring harness with everything connected.



In the next installment, we will start to work on the boiler and shorten the frame. Although I chose to scratchbuild a new boiler, there are alternatives to creating a late nineteenth century boiler by kitbashing available components.

What Are Friends For? Chapter 5

Gary D. Loiselle

A lot of the focus for this endeavor has been the result of dismantling Charlie Wickhorst's layout. I have also had a chance to reflect on my own layout. As I have previously mentioned, at the RRVD Division meet in September 2021 I presented a power point titled "What you need to know before you come to visit".

In addition to describing how the layout was built and scened, I had segments about how I have included family and friends. I have told you about Charlie Wickhorst and Bob Guintier. Many of you may or may not know Ed Kruschke, Lyle Fleener, and Jim Baker. (I'll save the "family" 'till later).

Ed Kruschke was the RRVD Chief Clerk. He was a former Milwaukee Road employee and was involved with their passenger car construction at the Pullman Company. On my layout I have Kruschke Lumber and Millwork. **(Photo K-1)**



Photo K-1

My industry is based on Ed's business card from when he worked for Vetter Manufacturing Co. (Photo K-2) (VETTER QUALITY WOODWORK SINCE 1893)



Photo K-2

I believe he was in the sales department. I am always reminded of Ed when I see the Menard's ad for their HO structure Vetter Sash and Door. (Photo K-3)



Photo K-3

Just by chance, during our June junket to Oregon I spotted the Menard's structure on the Blackhawk Model Railroad clubs' layout. (Photo K-4)



Photo K-4

To my dismay, the lighted sign on the structure was readable but the lighting washed it out every time I tried to get a good picture. As a final note about Ed, his son Mark has been an annual attendee at our annual show and sale. He lives up in the Milwaukee-area and still makes the journey to visit and say "hi".

Fleener Fast Freight on my layout is my way of remembering Lyle Fleener.
(Photo F-1)



Photo F-1

Charlie, Lyle and I spent many enjoyable hours railfanning. Lyle was our Division Superintendent during a lean time as far as activity and volunteerism. I believe Lyle was the person who initiated the Superintendent's plague that the Division awards those who compete the three-year term specified by the AP Program. Charlie and I created the Lyle Fleener Service Award to recognize RRVD members that have gone above and beyond to promote the RRVD and the enjoyment of model railroading.

My Fleener Fast Freight is my way of remembering my friend based on his career as a freight manager for Conway Central Express. The CCX truck terminal was located on Harrison Ave. It is now Old Dominion. I used a CCX note pad that Lyle gave me to create the logo on the side of the semi-trailer.
(Photo F-2)



Photo F-2

I was also fortunate enough to get a CCX promotional set of tractor with pups. (Photo F-3)

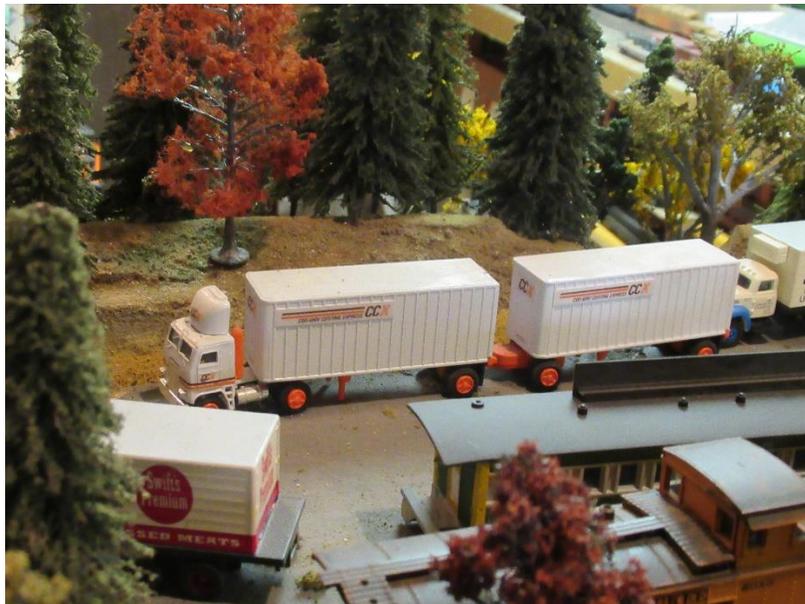


Photo F-3

For those of you that have seen any of my more recent show-and-tell presentations for the RRVD fall meet, you have seen a segment that I have included titled "In Memorial". My introductory picture for this is a picture of Lyle during a rail fan trip with Charlie and I to East Dubuque. (Photo F-4)



Photo F-4

Poem by me.

Life has many bridges we all must cross,

Age and time add yet one more,

With feelings of joy and a sense of loss,

We remember our friends who have crossed before. GDL

Up until now, the friends that I and other model railroaders have remembered on our layouts have come by way of structures and/or industries with their names included in some-way-shape-or-form. The exception to this, at least on my layout, is the remembering of Jim Baker. I did not take the opportunity to help build or operate on Jim's layout(s). I was able to visit his layouts and can appreciate his modeling skills. I also am thankful for his participation and contributions to the RRVD.

Unfortunately, ALS found Jim and less than two years he was taken. There are two things that I can do to honor Jim. First of all, I continue give a modest donation to the ALS Association every year. Secondly, I think it was Tom Maladecki that told me the Sunflower is the symbol of the ALS

Association. I have included Sun Flowers as part of the scenery up on the ledge overlooking a freight yard. **(Photo B-1)**

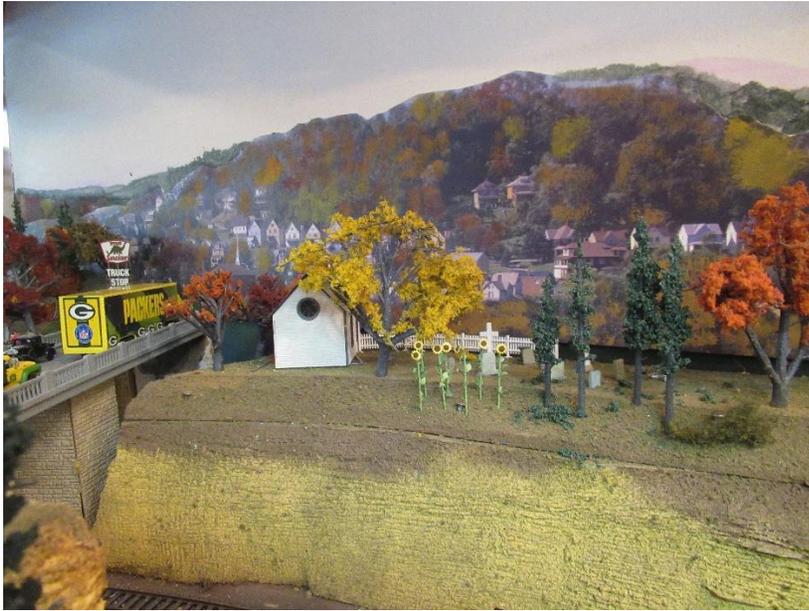


Photo B-1

I also included Sun Flowers on the corner scene that I did for Charlie's new layout. **(Photo B-2)**



Photo B-2

I tried searching my collection of pictures to try and find a photo of Jim. The only thing I could find was a photo of Jim at the railroad museum in Green Bay when Jim, Larry Cich and I went to Green Bay to help Bob Guinter put his layout back together after the move from Rockford. **(Photo B-3)**



Photo B-3

It may not be the best picture but, to me, it can bring a grin, a chuckle, or even an outright laugh. What can be better to make the heart feel lighter? In other words, what are friends for? GDL

For Sale



You, too, can own an HO scale model of the iconic Union Pacific class 4000 4-8-8-4 "Big Boy" so named when a worker at the Alco factory chalked those enduring words across the smokebox front. Arguably the most powerful steam locomotive type in the world, they were originally built with one purpose in mind - to roam the Wasatch range with ease. This gently used Trix model of UP 4013 in its magnificent wooden presentation case is equipped with DCC and sound. It is ready to roam your HO railroad, too.

The sale of this locomotive is the result of the generosity of Steve Faivre and all proceeds of the sale go to the Rock River Valley Division. Contact Ken Mosny, uiop999@comcast.net or 815-566-0595.

\$550.00

(offers considered)

For Sale



Offered is a Lionel catalog number 6-18203 Canadian Pacific SD-40-2 diesel locomotive with dual motors, Magne-Traction, AC drive, lights, and horn. I believe it was first cataloged in 1989 and appears on the cover of that catalog. It appears to be in as new cosmetic condition, intact with instructions and original box. It has just been serviced with new lubricants and look only in test run condition.

All proceeds of the sale go to the Rock River Valley Division-NMRA. Contact Ken Mosny, uiop999@comcast.net or 815-566-0595

\$175.00

(offers considered)