

Earning The Golden Spike

Bruce De Young, MMR



EduTRAIN™

By The End Of This Clinic You Will Be Able To:

- **Know how to earn the NMRA's Golden Spike Award, and...**
- **Be able to evaluate other NMRA's member's work and certify that they have earned the Golden Spike Award.**

The Golden Spike Award is considered as a first step in the NMRA's Achievement Program.

We will take a look at the exact wording of the Golden Spike's requirements as posted on the NMRA's website.

Hey, that is a lot of small print. We better break that down into bite sized bits. These are the three broad categories. We will look at each in turn.

- Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars)
- Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)
- Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars)

Display six (6) units of rolling stock (Scratchbuilt, craftsman, or detailed commercial kits).

Notice that the requirement is to "display" them. Nowhere does it say that they must earn a minimum number of points in judging - just that they must be displayed. (In the monthly contests at your division meetings, for example. Even having them set out on your layout, or a table in your basement counts as "display").

These models need to show a little more effort than a "shake the box*" kit. For example, by itself a freight car kit straight out of the box, is not enough to qualify. However, by painting and decaling it, adding a little detailing, perhaps some weathering, etc., you'll have a qualifying model in no time!

“Shake the Box*” Kit



Any kit that has molded on grab irons, ladders, stirrup steps, etc. would fall into this category.

... detailed commercial kits

- Let's look a bit closer at what constitutes a “detailed commercial kit.
- From the NMRA website: “These models need to show a little more effort than a "shake the box*" kit. For example, by itself a freight car kit straight out of the box, is not enough to qualify. However, by painting and decaling it, adding a little detailing, perhaps some weathering, etc., you'll have a qualifying model in no time!”
- Some examples follow. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words.

This Bowser model is certainly a “Shake the box kit”. However, make a coal load of ‘blue coal’ and weather the car, and you have one of your six pieces of rolling stock done.



This is an Athearn blue box kit. Weather it and add a load and you are good to go. The crates are commercial laser cut items. They come flat and you have to assemble them. The pipes are coffee stirrers. The bracing on the crates and the chains on the pipe load were made by the modeler.



This work caboose from Athearn was an ‘undecorated’ model. It was repainted, Susquehanna decals were added, a wood deck and wood side walls were added. The roof walk is also a replacement. Another example of a “detailed commercial model”. The flat car behind the Susquehanna boxcar is another example. It was weathered and a homemade lumber load was added.



By now you know that open cars (flatcars, gondolas, hoppers) are your Golden Spike Friends. This is an Ulrich Model. Lettering this time was with dry transfer letters. It is a Maintenance of Way car with assorted masonry materials (sand, cinder blocks, shovel, cement bags, etc.) inside. Weathered, of course.



All the rolling stock could be cars, but look at some motive power, too. First up is this undecorated Bachman GE 70 Ton diesel.



Same diesel after decals, weathering and crew were added. Ready for the Golden Spike!



Here's another shot of that diesel with a hopper that would also qualify.



Model steam? This IHC Loco got a front coupler, a crew, weathering (including some Neolube on the drive rods.) Oh, and some 'real' coal in the tender.



Can we please see some closeups? Sure. All shiny and new.



Ah, that is better. Wait a minute, is that 'real' coal in that tender?



Yes, and here is a better look. None of this is difficult, folks.



Now that we have looked at detailing “commercial kits”, there was some mention of “Craftsman Kits”. What are those?



This selection is just an example.

There are plenty more.

Tichy & Red Caboose: Styrene & you add all the details.

La Belle is a wood kit.

Westerfield and F&C are resin kits.

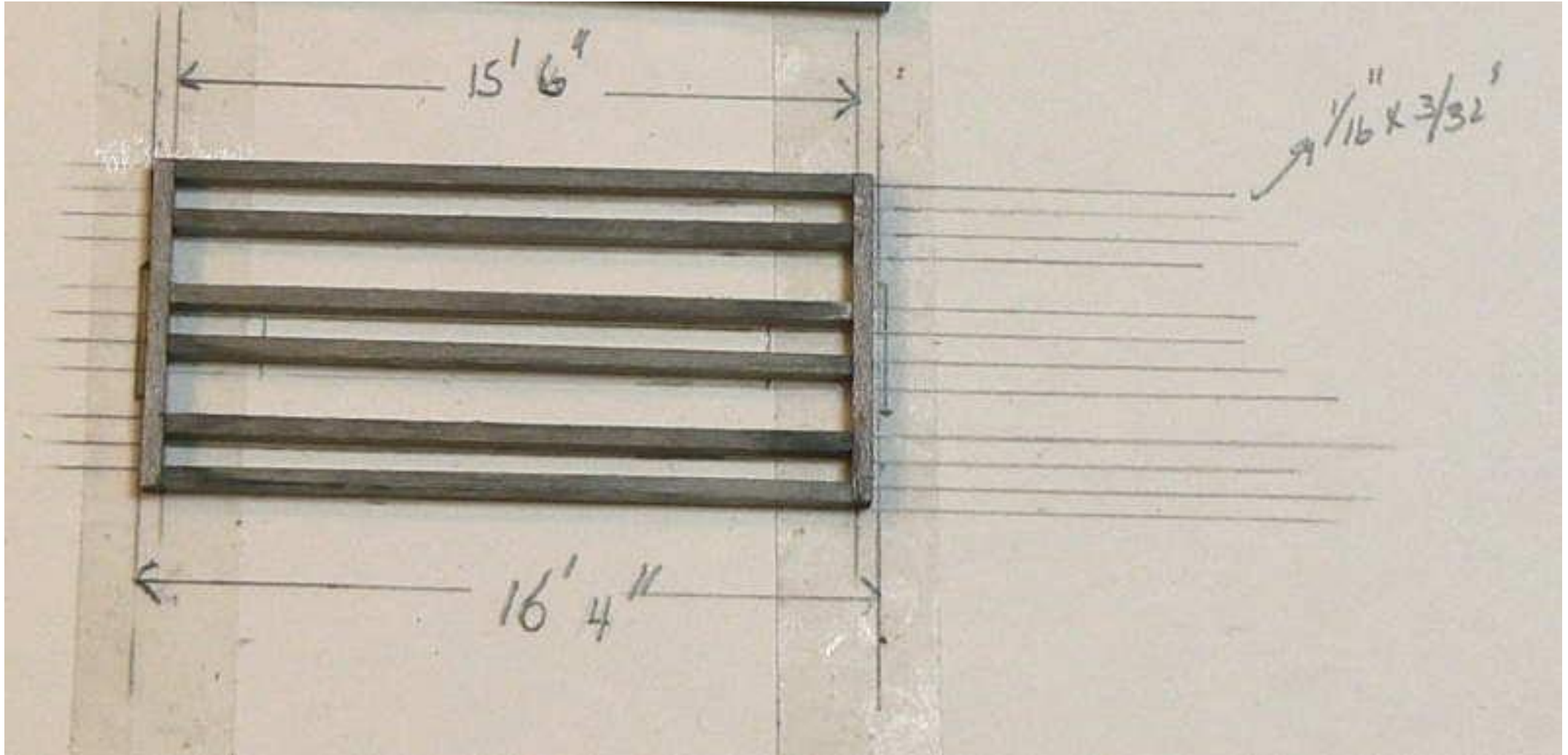
This Borden 'Butterdish' milk car is a resin kit from Funaro & Camerlengo. You have to paint, letter and add the details.



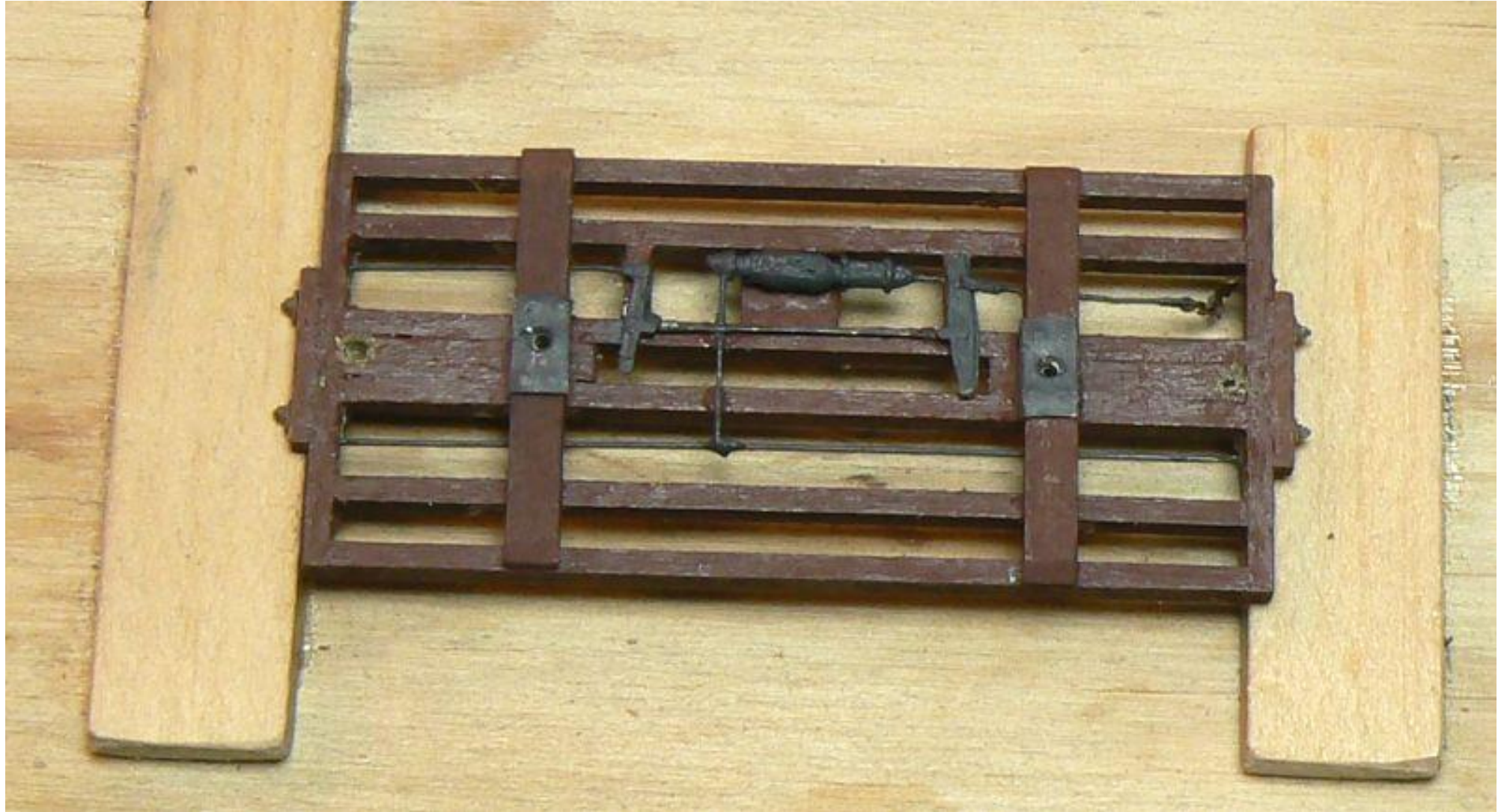
Before leaving the topic of Rolling Stock, what is this 'scratch built' option?

- Now to be honest, few (very few) individuals earning the Golden Spike Award have used a scratch built piece of rolling stock as one of the six pieces required.
- However, scratch building rolling stock is a necessary skill if you ever want to earn the “Cars Certificate” within the NMRA’s Achievement Program, so lets take a brief look at the process.

It all starts with a sketch or two. Drawing it to scale is a great idea. (This example of an HOn3 logging caboose was built by Bruce DeYoung, MMR. You can build right on top of your drawing. Here is the underframe.



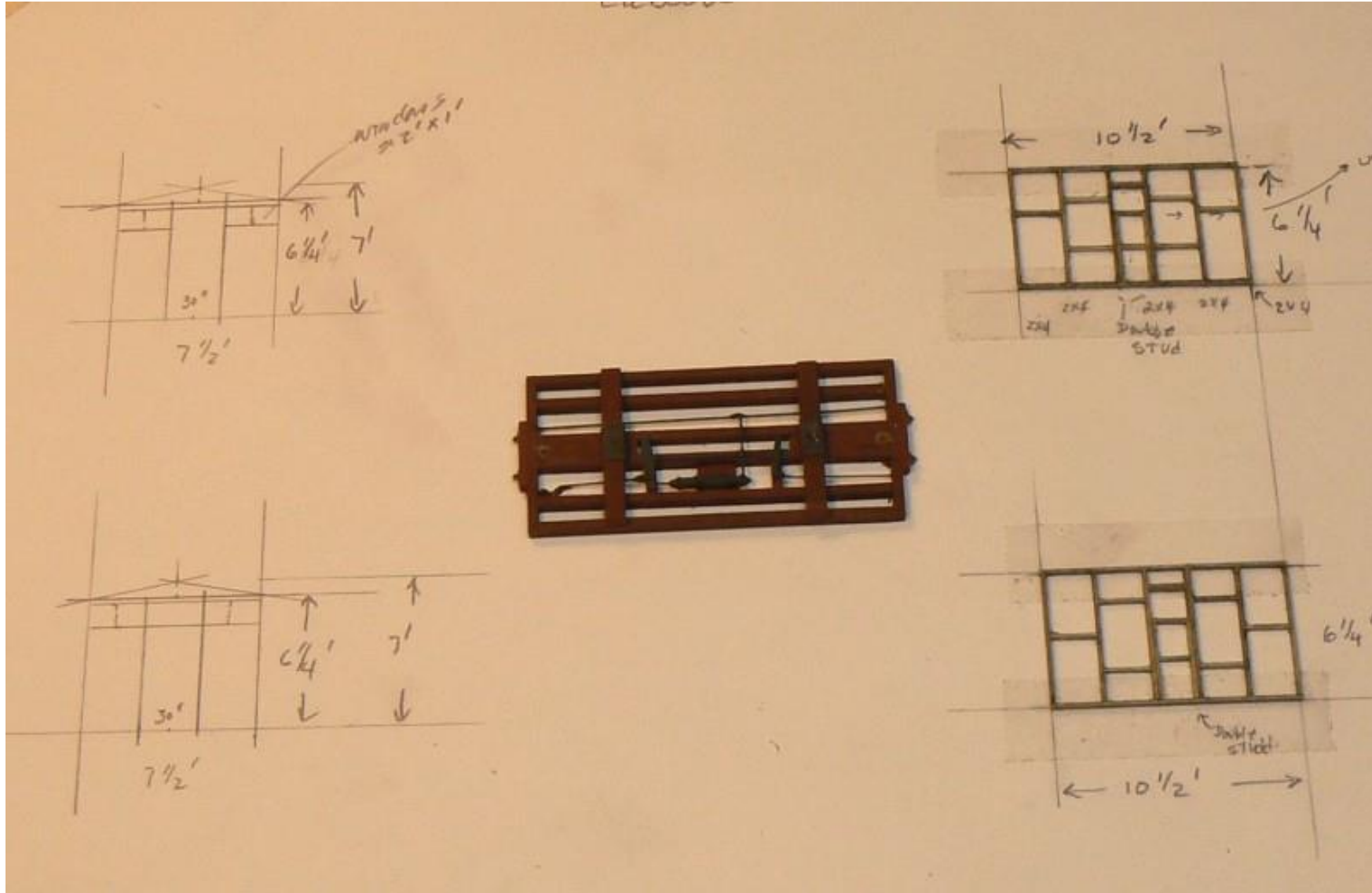
**Now add the bolsters, end frame details and
some basic brake rigging.**



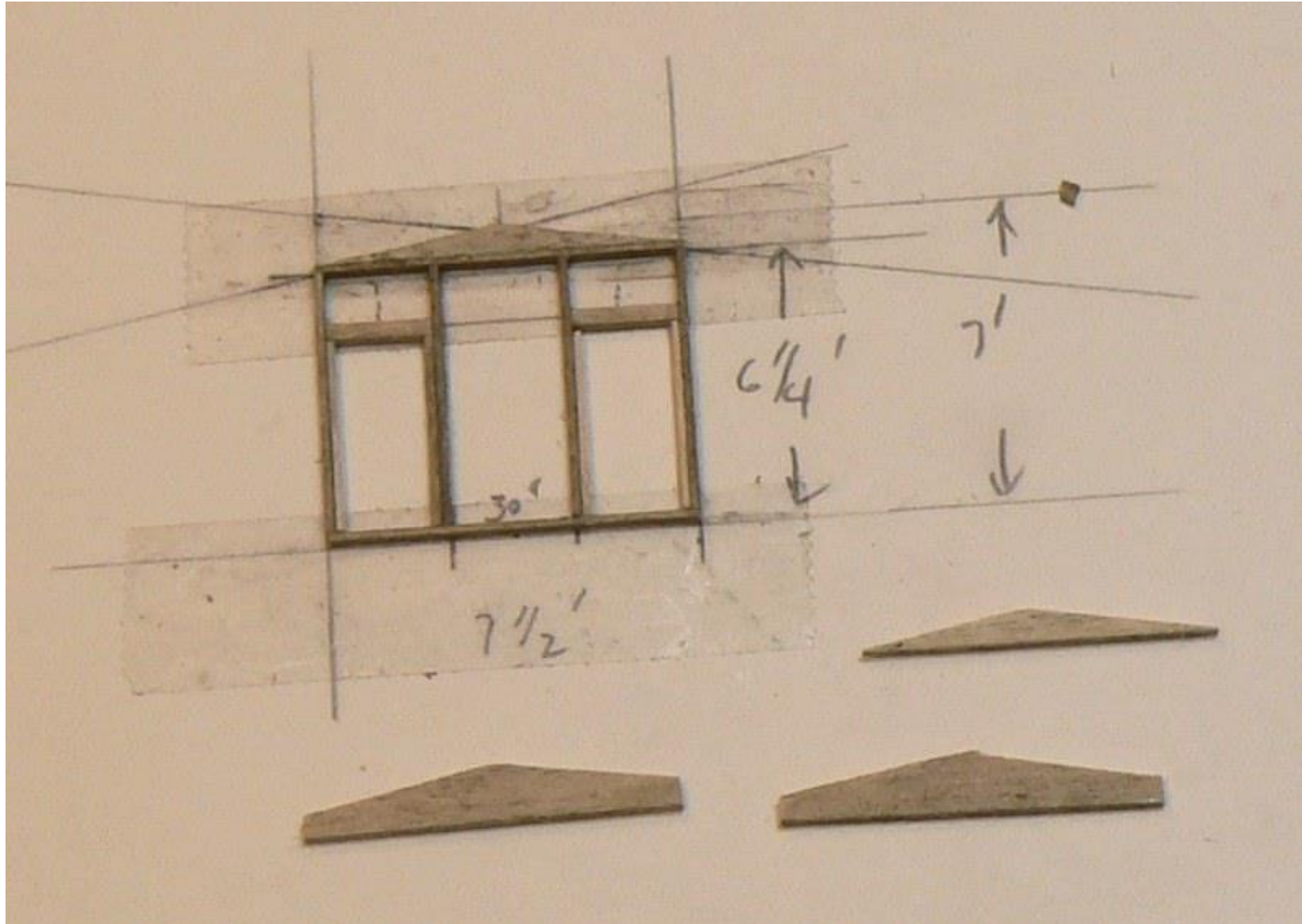
After adding the trucks and couplers, test for proper coupler height. Now time to glue on the deck boards.



Now sketch the walls and start the framing.



More framing.



And add the wall planks. Just like building a little building.



Glue the wall of the cabin together, paint and letter. The lettering here is done with dry transfer lettering.



Add the roof, cupola, grab irons, steps, etc. and voila!



You've now got the information you need to get your rolling stock ready for the Golden Spike, so it is time to move on to...

- Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)**

So, what do you have to do? To start, you have to construct a minimum of eight (8) square feet of layout.

- You can build your own layout
- You can build a 2' x 4' module
- You can convince a friend to allow you to build an 8 sq. ft. of her/his layout.
- You can build the required size on a club layout.

Scenery: In your 8 square feet, we don't want to see what is shown in the photo below. We do want:

- Realistic scenery for the region modeled and the for what the scene is representing.
- All track in the 8 sq. ft. must be ballasted including turnouts and other special pieces of trackwork.
- Buildings should be 'planted' in the scenery.



You do not need to model a mountain scene with terrific plaster rock work – but you could.



You don't need to make your own trees or model some water – but you could.



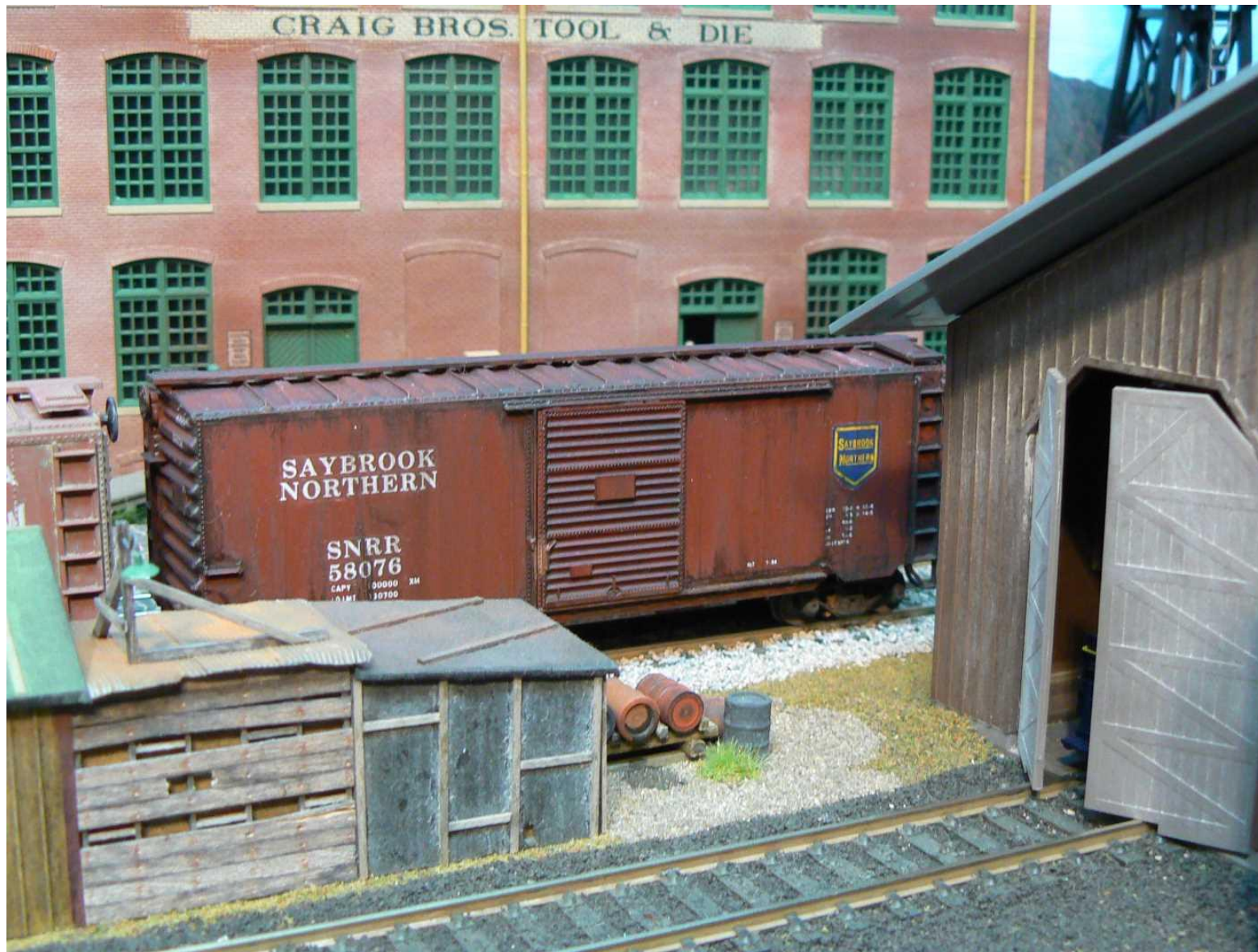
In fact, this yard area earned both the Golden Spike and the AP Scenery Certificates. Notice any trees or water?



Let's take a closer look. Cinder ballast, some 'burnt' grass, weeds, detail items found in yards, etc.



Here is another scene from the yard.



Plywood base painted an earth color. A thin layer of diluted white glue with either dirt or Woodland Scenics Burnt Grass sifted in. Ballast last.



Here is a scene away from the yard. Contoured roadbed, more greenery.



Structures

- Construct five (5) structures (scratchbuilt, craftsman, or detailed and commercial kits). These structures may be separate, or one or more of them may be part of a single scene.
- We just saw this wording for rolling stock. Let's see some examples with structures.
- Remember that "structures" aren't just buildings. Things like bridges and trestles also fall into this category.
- Basically, in the Golden Spike, we are looking for use of some modeling skills beyond gluing.

Question: There are some beautiful Pre-Built and nicely details Structures. Could one of those be used as one of the 5 Structures?

- **Ans: Stop pulling my leg!**
- **We are looking for a demonstration of some modeling skills – not examples of nice structures.**

I built a nice plastic kit. Looks good. Does it count?



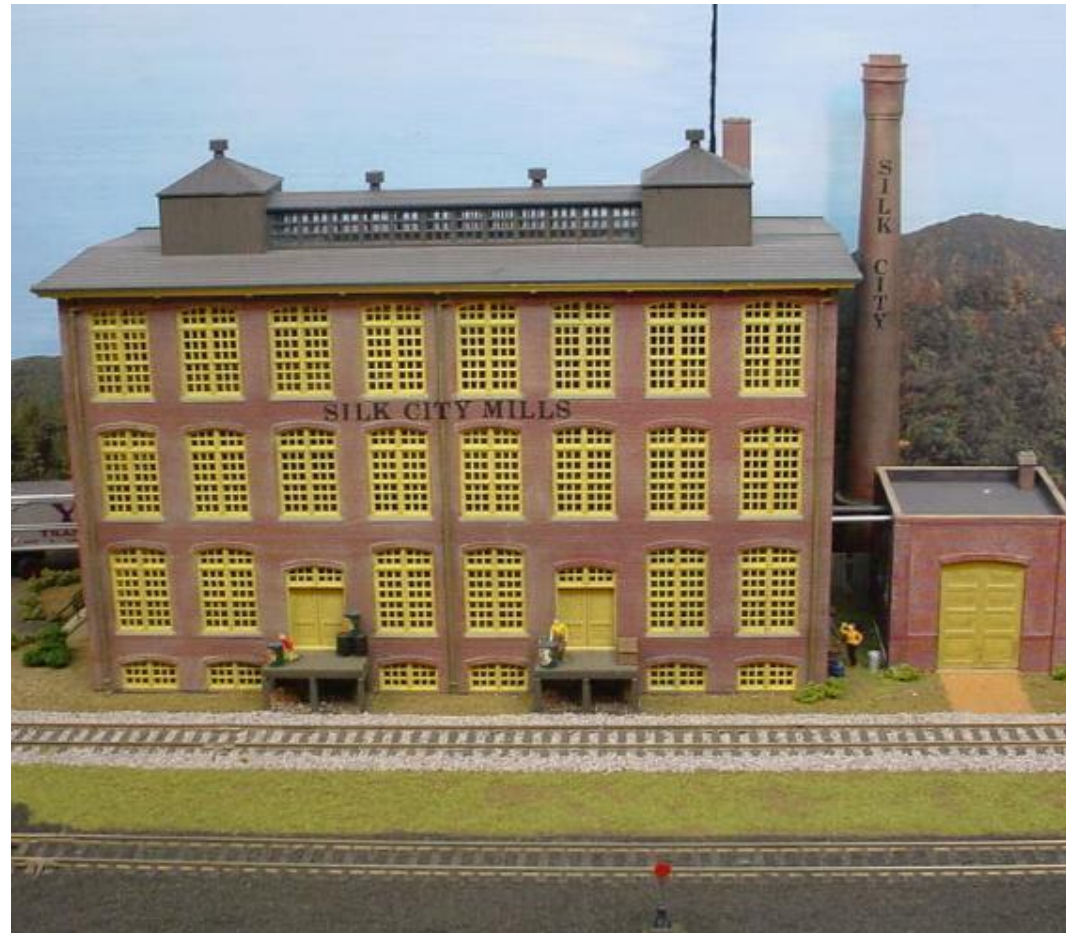
You know the answer unless...

- Did you re-paint the walls? And/or,
- Did you weather the walls and roof? And/or,
- Did you make your own sign for the structure? And/or
- Did you add some details to that loading dock? And/or
- Did you modify the structure or add to it in some way?

Or, you could just scratch build that pickle factory out of wood.



Here is a Walthers styrene kit. The walls have been given a wash to add mortar to the bricks, a name has been added using dry transfers, some details have been added to the loading docks, a boiler house and smoke stack has been added to the structure. It would count.



This styrene model is found on many layouts.
Let's see what some modelers have done with it.



As built, right out of the box. (Would not qualify for the Golden Spike.)



This is an O-Scale version of the building. It has been painted and a foundation has been added underneath. This would qualify for the Golden Spike.



You can see that the walls have been re-painted (except for the dog house), a new loading dock has been built, weathering has been added. Good for Golden Spike.



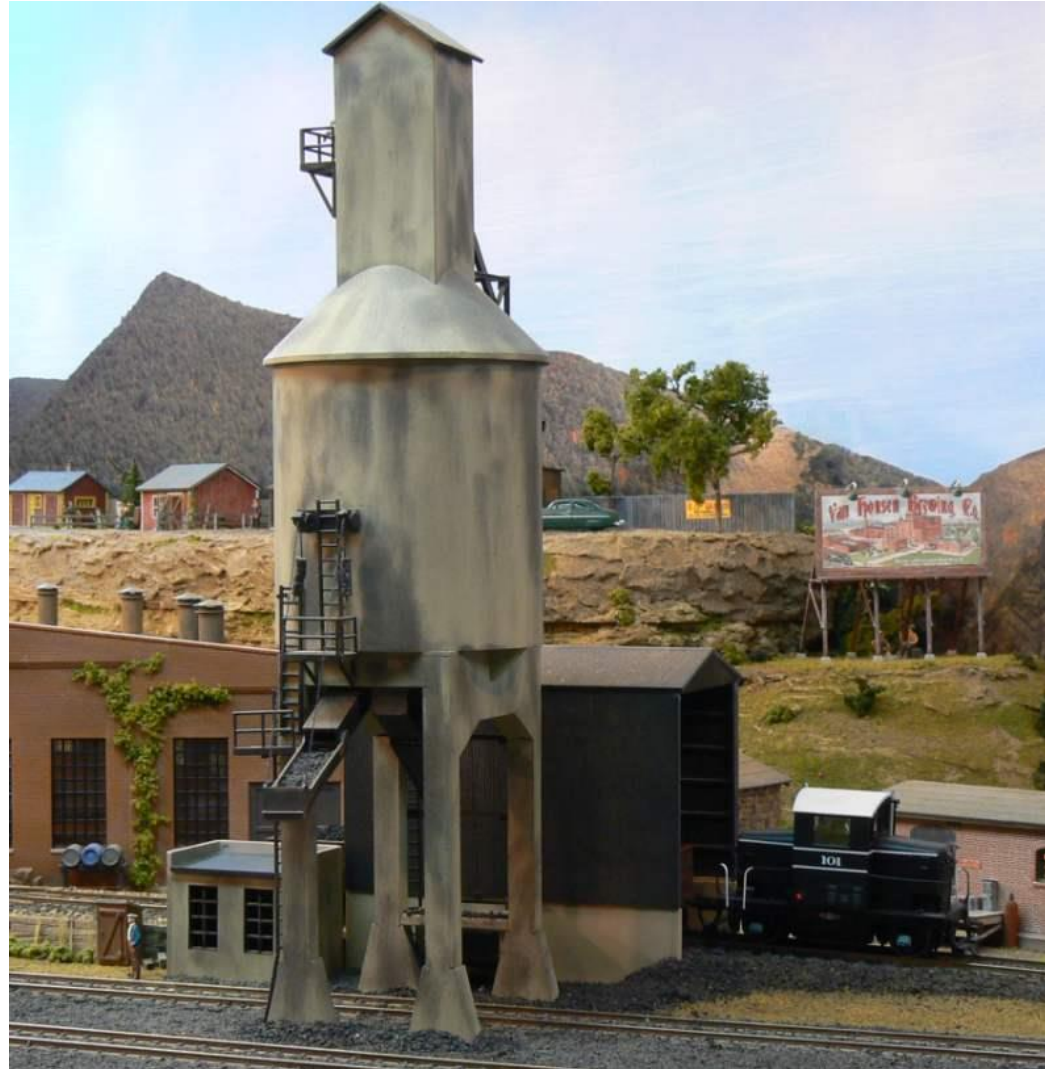
Painted, weathered, new sign. Sad that the loading dock is empty and there is no glazing in the window.
Borderline okay.



Almost hard to recognize it as the same structure.
Definitely good for Golden Spike! New roof on tall
part, cut back the overhang on lower roof, boiler
house addition, foundation, wood loading docks, etc.



This Styrene Coal Tower Is Painted, Weathered, and Coal Has Been Added To The Chute. It Qualifies.



Summary ideas for “upgrading” styrene kits

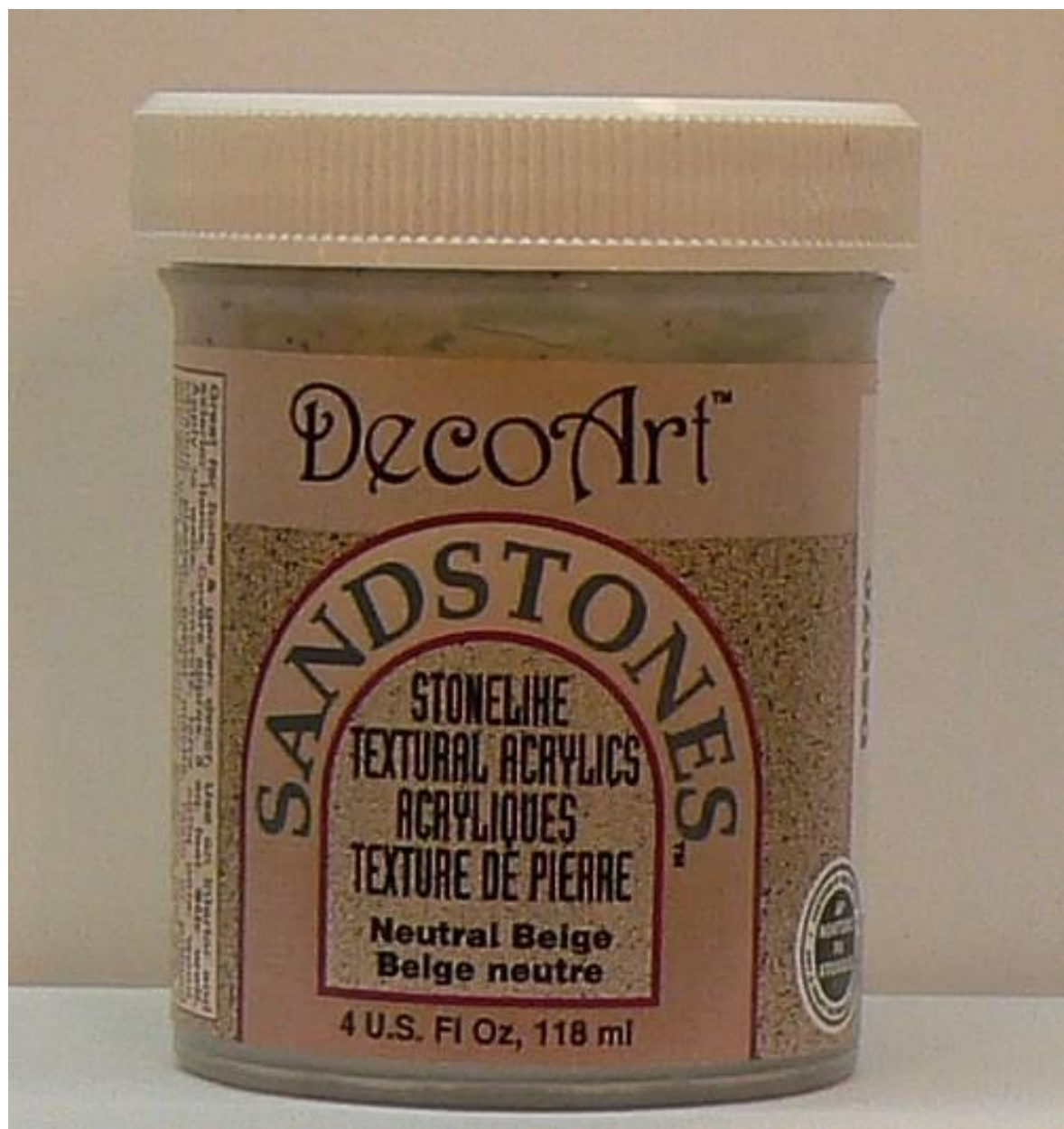
- Paint the walls, roof and windows
- Weather the model
- Change the roof line
- Add a foundation
- Change the roof material
- Add a porch, deck, or loading dock
- Put an addition on the structure
- Add interior and/or exterior details

Almost any wood structure kit will count because you have to paint the walls, add you own roof shingles, and other details. Add a sign and a little weathering and you are good.



Another home made sign.





DecoArt™

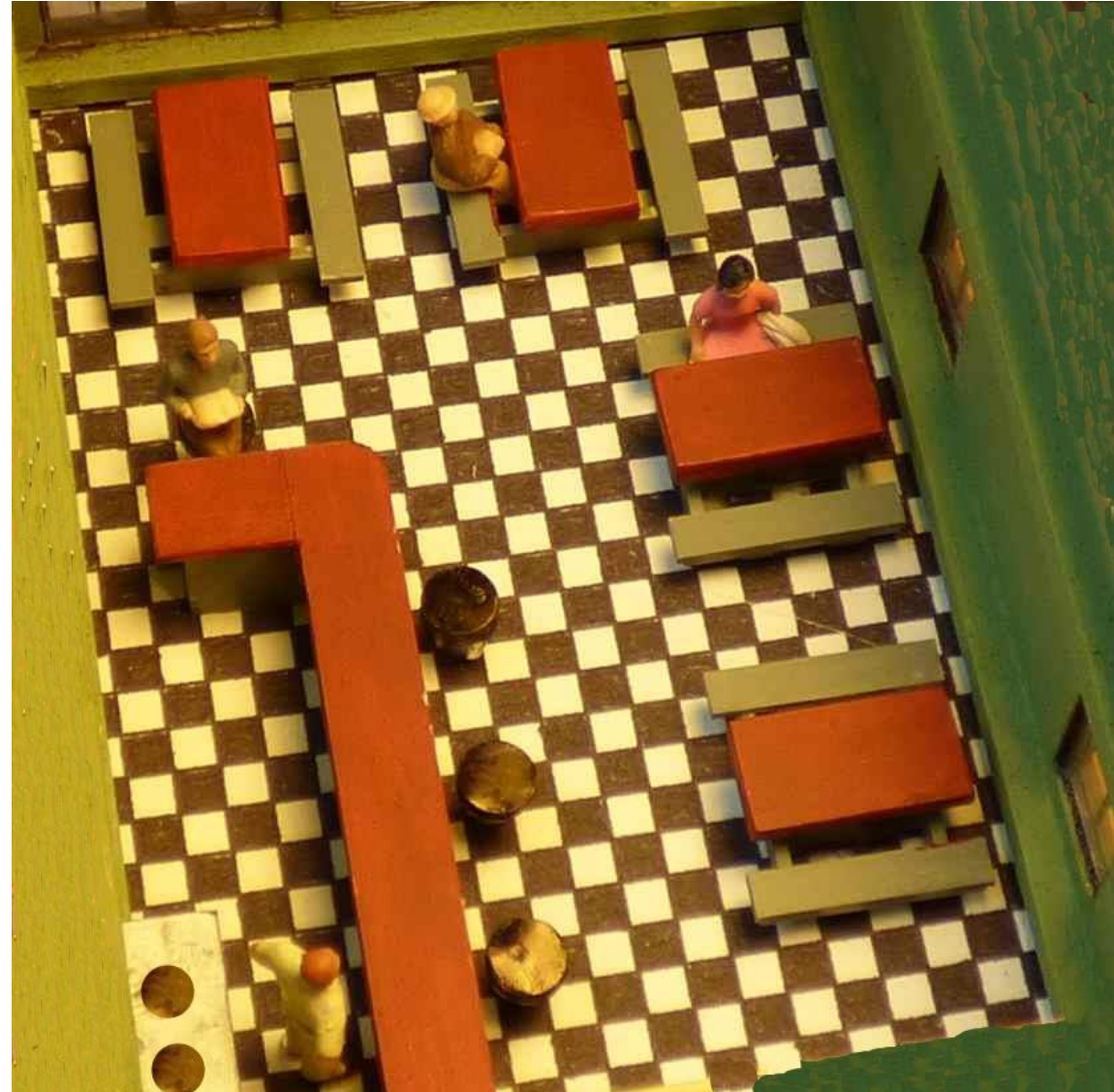
SANDSTONES™

STONELINE
TEXTURAL ACRYLICS
ACRYLIQUES
TEXTURE DE PIERRE

Neutral Beige
Beige neutre

4 U.S. Fl Oz, 118 ml

Although not necessary, a simple interior has been added (only seen thru the windows).



Want something even simpler?



Nice Church. What Do You Think?

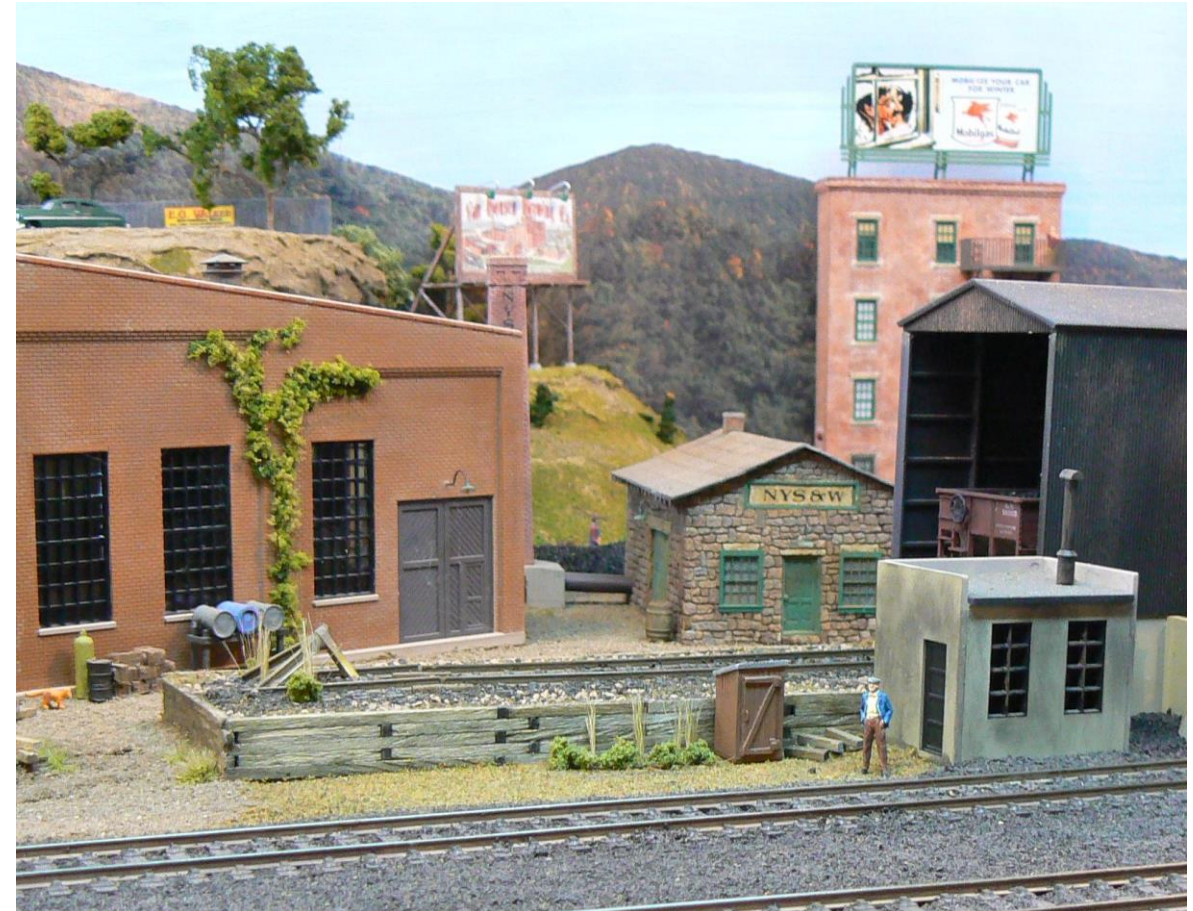


Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

- Three (3) types of trackage are required (turnout, crossing, etc.)
- All must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed.
- Commercial trackage may be used.
- "Types of trackage" can be just about anything: turnouts, crossings, and grade elevation (a change in elevation of the track) are all examples of "types of trackage".
- Also, note that the three types DO NOT have to be different. For example, just having three simple turnouts will qualify.

Let's Look At Some Pictures

This incline up to a coal dump satisfies “a change in elevation”



There are enough turnouts in this yard to satisfy the requirement. All ballasted. Track in the foreground is on 'contoured roadbed'.



All must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed. Proper roadbed is dependent on use/location. Yard trackage is not normally on 'contoured roadbed'.



Mainline ballast and contoured roadbed in front, cinder ballast and less contoured on the slate pit siding in rear.



Most logging railroad trackage was right on the ground and ballasted with dirt and debris.



The 'take away' is ballasting is required, and...
It should be appropriate to the setting.



Electrical

- All installed trackage must be properly wired so that two trains can be operated simultaneously (Double-track main, single-track main with sidings, block or DCC, etc.).
- This requirement can also be easier than it sounds. Notice the option for a single track main with sidings. This means that as long as you can cut power to the sidings individually, you can run one train, park it on a siding while you run another, then park it and run the first again. This meets the requirement.
- Just have the member working towards the Golden Spike demonstrate this. Parking one loco while operating a second loco, running two trains in different blocks, or operating two locos with DCC will suffice.

Electrical, Continued

- Provide one additional electrical feature such as powered turnouts, signaling, turnout indication, lighted buildings, etc.

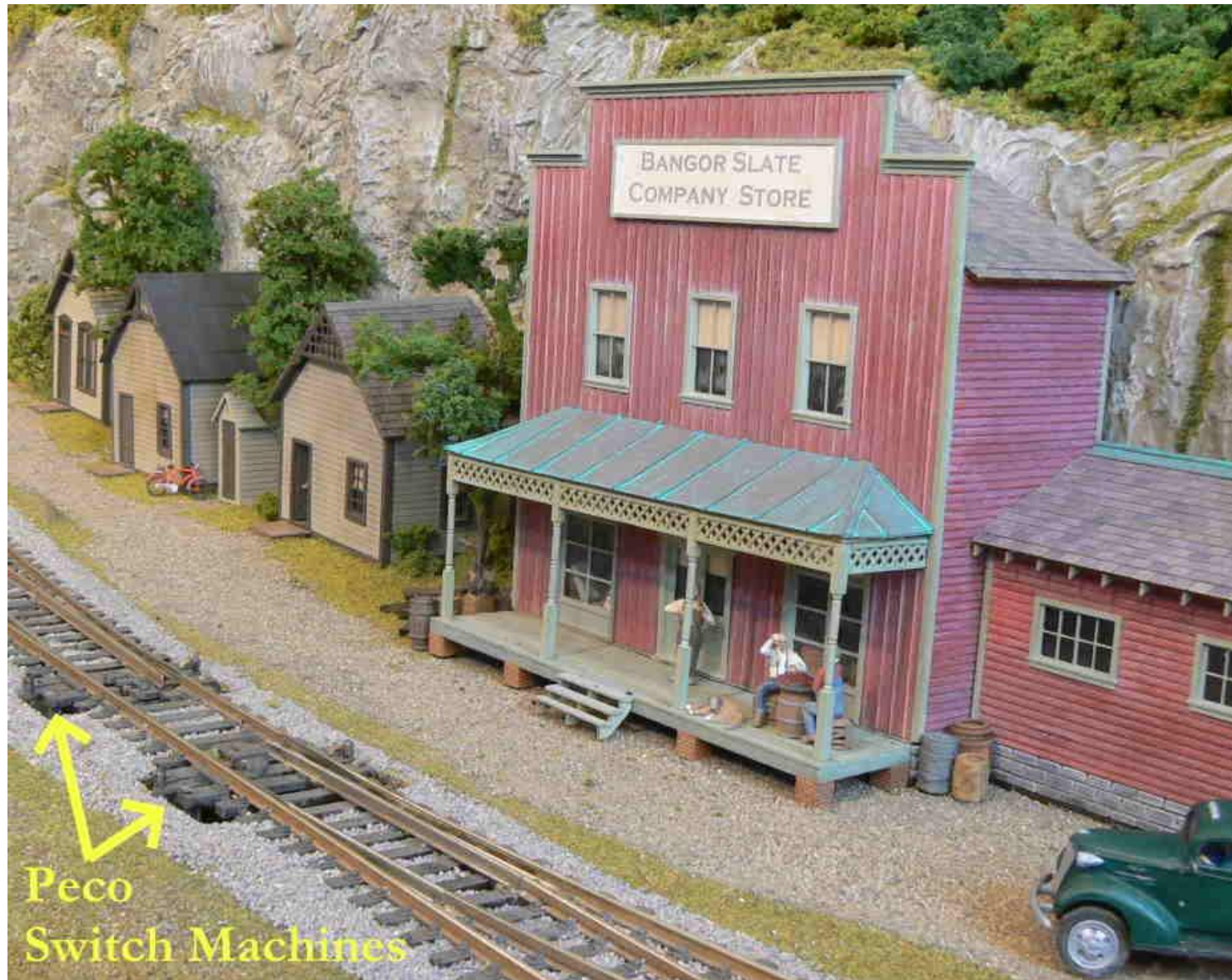
Either The Caboose Marker Lights Or The Low Signal Box In This Yard Would Qualify.



Any Structure With Interior And/Or Exterior Lighting Will Qualify.



Turnout Machines Will Qualify



Some Final Words From the NMRA Website

- Not all of these requirements need to be met on the same layout (or piece of layout).
- They don't even need to be met in the same scale!
- If you want to build G scale rolling stock, an N scale Model Railroad setting, and an HO scale layout for trackage and wiring, go ahead.
- And remember that the structures may be separate, or one or more of them may be part of a single scene. They do not all have to be located on the 8 sq. ft. of layout that you are using for the Golden Spike.

Let's Look At The Golden Spike Application Form.

	ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD APPLICATION FORM May 2006
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PLEASE COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION FORM AND SEND TO YOUR REGIONAL OR DIVISIONAL AP CHAIR

Member's Name: _____ NMRA#: _____ EXP: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State/Prov: _____ Country: _____ Postal Code: _____

Date Submitted: _____ Region: _____

The Golden Spike Award will be awarded to any NMRA member who has completed the Qualifications Checklist, obtained the necessary signatures and who does not hold MMR status. It will be administered by the regional and divisional AP Chairs. AP regulations and definitions apply for scratchbuilding and detailing. To qualify for the award the member must complete the following checklist; obtain the signature of the divisional AP Chair or another NMRA member designated by the divisional Chair. The divisional Chair will submit the signed form to the regional AP Chair who will issue the Golden Spike Award certificate.

QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

1. Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars):

1. Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars):

- ☐ Display six units of rolling stock either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or detailed commercial kits.

2. Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)

- ☐ Construct a minimum of eight square feet of layout including scenery.
- ☐ Construct five structures either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or detailed commercial kits. If a module has less than five structures, additional structures separate from the scene may be presented.

3. Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

- ☐ Three types of trackage required (e.g. turnout, crossing, crossover, etc.). All must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed. Commercial trackage may be used.
- ☐ All installed trackage must be properly wired so that two trains can be operated simultaneously (e.g. double track main, single track main with sidings, and block or command control).
- ☐ Provide one additional electrical feature such as power operated turnouts, signaling, turnout indication, lighted buildings, etc.

Witness: _____ **Name:** _____ **NMRA #:** _____

Regional AP Chair: _____ **Region:** _____

In practice...

- Visit the location (either in person or via Zoom) and have the modeler show you the Rolling Stock, 8 sq. ft. of scenery, structures, trackwork and electrical requirements.
- Have the modeler explain how he/she 'upgraded' the Rolling Stock or Structures.
- Prove that running two trains is possible.
- Show the electrical components in action.
- Fill out and sign the form.
- Send the form to your Division AP Chair.

Before You Know It, You Can Earn The Golden Spike!

 *National Model Railroad
Association, Inc.*

GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD

This Achievement Program Certificate has been awarded to
Your name here

*in Recognition for Completing the Requirements
Established by the A.P. for the Construction of a Model Railroad.*



Date
A.P. Chair Signature

Achievement Program Certificate