



Dennis Andreas

Railroad Report

Landmark Structures D's Diner

A bit of a twist in the assembly of a pre-fab building.

This month we will look at an HO building from Woodland Scenics Pre-Fab series of Landmark Structures. The model we will build is D's Diner, a colorful 50's era fast-food drive-in. This structure differs from many railroad specific kits in that the interior is illuminated and some of the back drops and signage rely on dry transfer decals.

A small point to make is although it is not a difficult project, don't let the "Pre-Fab" miss-lead you or your customers. There is still some work to be done, mainly painting, prior to assembly. And like all plastic models a release agent is used in the manufacturing process so a part can separate easily from its mold. Not at all unusual, there was still some release agent residue present, especially on the large flat sections. All it takes is a washing with warm soapy water under a faucet, but should a builder not take a moment to remove the release agent it will cause the paint to retreat in areas. It's a minor issue, but it's always a good practice to clean all plastic parts prior to assembly.

To get started lets begin by painting the larger parts. Since the kit is molded in gray and most of the finished model will be painted white I expected this to take primer and several coats of paint and I wasn't disappointed. It required many coats light of white until the molded gray color was completely covered. Also there are many small parts to this model. Mainly bicycles $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch long, tiny trash pails and figures with and without arms to paint. For the small pieces, remind your beginning cus-



Properly painted and assembled, D's Diner can add a bit of 1950's nostalgia to any era correct model railroad.

tomers to leave the parts attached to the sprue, as the trees are invaluable as a helping hand during painting.

A topic that has never been covered in this column is the application of dry transfer decals. Experienced modelers may be familiar with these transfers as they are used in a variety of hobbies, but many modelers may never have used them or understand the process. I was introduced to them many years ago when I was labeling equipment for the mili-

tary. Dry transfer decals are easy to use but for the best results, they must be handled with care.

Basically, dry Transfers are decals made of paint. Actually all decals are made of paint, but in most cases the decal is painted on top of a transfer medium, and the medium is used to glue the decal in place. In the case of dry transfers, they are created by painting the required image in reverse on clear acetate and then transferred to the surface by rubbing through the carrier. It may sound complicated, but it isn't, it just takes a



The sprue provides a valuable set of helping hands when painting small parts, so leave them attached until needed.

little practice to perfect. Some precautions: always store them in the paper they were sent in and don't fold, pinch or apply any pressure until ready to transfer. Also be sure the shiny side of the paper is touching the reverse side of the decal and don't let your fingers touch the decal or you may ruin it. This may sound like a lot of precautions, but the results are well worth the effort.

To apply a dry transfer a modeler needs sharp medium

size scissors and a burnishing tool of some sort. Burnishing tool is a fancy name for a piece of wood or plastic with a smooth end used to rub the decal sheet. The trick to dry transfers is to cut out the image you want as close to the border as you can and position it carefully before beginning the transfer process. A person wants his transfer to fit flat on the area to be applied. Now with the burnishing tool, rub the shiny side to press the decal onto the surface. Don't



D's Diner consists of a number of sub-assemblies that need to

let the carrier shift or the decal may break. If it does, carefully position it to mate the broken edge and continue. While burnishing, you will see the decal release through the carrier, continue until fully released and you're able to pull the carrier away. Make certain to position the decal carefully as unlike water transfer decals there is no opportunity to move the decal around.

To protect the decal there is one additional step. It needs to be covered with a coat of clear paint. This is accomplished through the use of an acrylic or enamel-based paint, but never use a clear paint with a lacquer base on dry transfers as the lacquer will damage the decal. Depending on the model, use flat or gloss clear. In the case of the diner, gloss is used so the finish will be bright.

This model also comes with a small lamp along with 12 inch wire leads to light the interior of the diner. The folks at Woodland have made this very easy to do. The roof of the diner has two posts to hold the wire in place. They also took care to route the wire to the back of the building behind a false wall and into a hole in the base. For the diner, a small soldering iron was used to melt the posts over the wire to hold it in place. Glue would also work equally as well.

As was noted earlier, there are a lot of small pieces to paint and detail. This is where you, again, have to remind your beginning customer to take his time preparing all the pieces. Trying to touch up things later, after everything is assembled will be pretty tough to do.

One of the trickier parts to paint is the candy striped roof support and signage. For me, trying to paint these by hand is not an option. The easiest solution is after painting the base color, use some striping tape to mask off the areas not to be painted. This will give us a very clean edge. Once the base color has been painted and allowed to dry for at least a day, some spare 1/8 wide tape, in this case some pin stripe material laying around the shop, was used for the mask. Starting at the base of the twisty poles, wrap the tape pulling it gently for a good seal and then paint the red stripe. The signage is done in a similar manner. Paint the base coat and mask. Then paint the contrasting color, let dry, and when ready, remove the masking tape.



As with any structure it's the little things, like the bicycles and picnic bench, that add a sense of realism to the building.

Now we can take all the pieces and do a test fit. Install the windows and take note of where we may need to touch up the paint. If all looks good, it's time for final assembly. Remember to scrape the paint from parts, sockets and posts of where you will be gluing to be sure of a good bond. In the case of D's Diner most of the parts have keyed posts and sockets to make final assembly easy and straight forward.

To utilize the light in the diner it must be connected to a transformer accessory power terminal, or if a more complex layout is involved, the accessory power distribution panel. Since the lamp in the diner could eventually burn out, suggest the roof not be glued in place, or if gluing is necessary, just tack the corners to allow for easy removal of the roof in the future, or sell customers an LED setup and any future lighting issues will be history.



Clearly visible with the roof and windows removed is the interior signage which is all dry-transfer decals.

To summarize, it is important to instill confidence in customers by providing suggestions and hints, maybe even a little prodding when necessary, to get them started. It shows you've been down the same road you're asking them to travel and provides them with the knowledge that they can turn to an experienced dealer when a little help is needed. And this will bring them back into your store. **HM**