



Dennis Andreas

Railroad Report

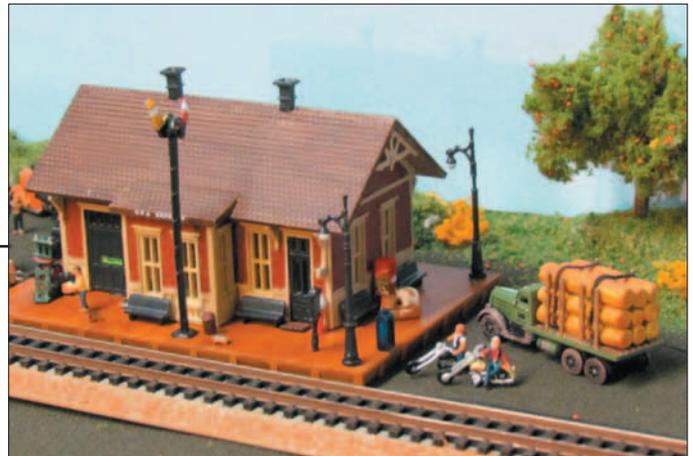
Winter is Building Time

We're stuck inside anyway, so let's construct a couple of buildings.

For most of the country winter has settled in. The changes in the clock and shorter days usually mean more inside time. What is better to do while inside than build stuff? We've already spoken about the small items; figures, animals and vehicles to enhance our customers' layouts. This month we will look at some kit buildings from Woodland Scenics. Woodland Scenics has a large variety of structures from its Ready Made Landmarks Structures Series to its build-it-yourself lines of plastic kits. The two kits we will highlight are from the Pre-Fab Landmark Structures.

All of the Woodland Scenics kits come with detailed instructions and great illustrations showing parts placement and the recommended order of assembly, and the Pre-Fab series is no different. The instruction booklet has pictorials that identify the parts on the sprue for easy location and identification. This is very useful as it is a huge help in placing the many small parts correctly. The Pre-Fab line is designed to give the end user a very nice structure, but with fewer parts than a highly detailed structure and they take less time to assemble. The Pre-Fab line has a lot to offer for either the hard-core modeler or the beginner.

This month I thought to change things up a little, it might be fun to take the customer's angle for the builds and try to answer the never ending questions, "How long does it take, and how hard is it to build?" As impossible as these questions are to answer, since there are always never ending variables, it was felt an average base line could be established.



I chose the N-scale Woodland Station and the HO Pavilion for construction. These are really nice kits considering the low parts count and lack of super-fine details. Even so, based on the size of N-scale alone, one can expect some tiny parts and, like many people, I'm famous for launching pieces into the depths of my shop never to be found, but it is time to proceed, so onward we go.

As part of past columns I have built a number of railroad kits before, usually to show the process. But to answer the standard questions faced by all dealers, we will need to take note of the time it took to prepare, paint and assemble the models. Should one read the box and take nothing else into consideration, the Pre-Fab buildings do say assembles in minutes. This is true, a person can set aside about 15 minutes to completely assemble and glue a kit together, but the results are pretty bland and generally disappointing. What the builder will have for his few minutes of effort is a gray building with a few decals for detailing.

It has been said many times, but the finished project will only look as good as the effort put into preparation. The process involved with cleaning and painting a project is where time is spent. Even so, the mis-

sion will be to build the two Pre-Fab kits simultaneously, each with a nice paint job. Not necessarily the type of finish that wins a first-place medal for scale and accuracy, but still something any builder would be proud to use as



Woodland Scenics offers a wide variety of buildings, which are available in multiple scales, in its easy to assemble Pre-Fab series of kits.

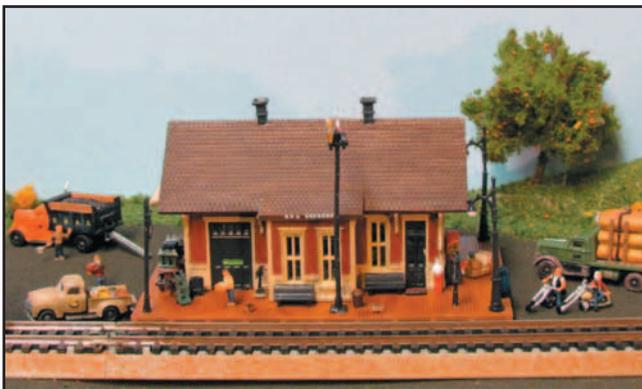


Although it contains many small parts, the N-scale Woodland Station builds quickly into an impressive looking model.

part of a diorama, or place on his railroad layout.

With the lecture behind us, it's time to start cleaning parts. I like to use paper towels saturated with common household rubbing alcohol as a cleaning agent. It doesn't leave soap residue and the only thing that needs to be done is to change the paper towels frequently. Remember, the goal is to clean the parts, not smear release agents around the plastic. [I use warm soapy water to prepare plastic parts for paint, but my dad used to call me "Mr. Clean." The goal is wax and grease-free parts – Ed]. Once clean, set the parts aside and while they are drying it's time choose our color palette either from the inventory of paint on hand in our workshop, or we'll need to make a trip to the local hobby store for more color options.

There are so many different paints to choose from it is hard to say what's best, but my favorites are the Badger Acrylic Model Flex paints. The Badger flex paints, though thin for spraying, are great for brushing. By applying multiple coats, one can get variations in colors that look aged and weathered, as opposed to a non-thinned heavy coat



The completed station is only three inches long, but it really looks impressive when set along a layout's railroad siding.

of paint. Heavier paints can also fill the fine details molded into structures ruining the look of a model.

I start with the larger pieces and the building bases. While these dry it's time to move on to the smaller items.

Usually the detail pieces will use multiple colors, so start with the lighter colors first and let dry thoroughly before applying darker colors. The first thing that is obvious in this process is N-scale takes a steady hand to paint and, due to its size, is slightly more difficult to assemble. Often I find a similar model in N-scale verses HO will take about three times longer to finish. That said, between reading directions (yes I did), cleaning parts and applying base coats to some of the detail bits, it has so far taken two hours not including drying time. This is for both models — remember these two buildings are being assembled simultaneously.



The HO pavilion took slightly less time to assemble only because the parts are larger and a little easier to handle.

Once the painted detail parts of the pavilion were dry, it took an additional 30 minutes to add the fencing and route the supplied lamp and wire to the inside roof top. While the Pavilion glue was drying I moved onto painting the tiny detail parts for the station.

By jumping back and forth, and spending another 30 minutes of detail painting on the station, I moved on to the final assembly of the pavilion. It's always necessary, and the pavilion was no different, but during final assembly I applied some touch up paint where needed and the entire structure was set aside to dry completely. One thing of note, and always worth mentioning, is to not glue the roof assembly to the base of the pavilion. This will allow easy access to the inside to change the theme, such as the season, at a later date.

Painting the station's little bits on the molding sprue is the only way to go. Most of the parts are less than a quarter inch in size, making it quite the challenge. In some cases I chose to paint items such as the telephone booth

sign blue. Between the small size and fingers that covered the entire part, magnifying glasses and paint brush with about three hairs were my solutions of choice. After paint, a later challenge was the application of dry transfers. I did manage to get some labeling on the doors, and soda machine. And was even able to apply the station name, but that was all.

Now that we have painted the detail bits and started final assembly and placement, the paint brush with the three hairs again comes into play to add a drop of paint where the parts were separated from the molding trees. Each piece, piece-by-piece, is gently placed using a tweezers taking care not to shoot the part away by using too much pressure. Miraculously, no pieces were lost, but after all were placed we have used up another two hours of time on the station. A little touch up with the paint (the camera is cruel) and we are ready to mount it to our train board.

Along with the pavilion, even as nice as it looks, the station would not be complete if it did not appear to be alive with people, so we employed the use some additional Woodland Scenics vehicles and figures.

So what is the answer to the two big questions? First



With the addition of lighting and a few figures for interest, a person quickly begins to wonder what time the dance starts.

how hard was it to build? The pavilion and any larger structures will be easier, that's common sense, but any structure with lots of small details will be a challenge to assemble and paint. Additionally the level of detail in color will affect the time to complete. The second question of how long will it take? I refer back to the comment above on level of detail. For the level I chose to build to, it took just over five hours for each of the

buildings, not including preparation, drying time or mounting to the train board.

Now here is where the magic comes in. As a sales person, read your customers. If they have focus, tend to be detail oriented and enjoy a challenge, they should be able to complete a model in just over five hours not including drying time. Should you have a customer that is bouncing from item to item and fits the instant gratification mold then maybe you should steer him away from kit building to the Ready Made line. This could keep you from becoming frustrated and keep your customer happy. That said, many consumers still appreciate a challenge, so maybe with just a little nudge and a lot of guidance, you can be the one to push them over the edge. **HM**

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