



Dennis Andreas

# Railroad Report

## N-Scale Build Part-Four

*It's been a while since you visited the layout, but it's progressing nicely.*

Last time we worked on the N-scale layout, it involved the Main Street area and the location of the trolley track. We setup the streets and curbing along with the inlaid track for the trolley rails. To give this area the proper finish, another product that Woodland Scenics offers was used: its Smooth-It Roadway mix. This product provides a super fine surface for simulated concrete roads and sidewalks. It's a water-based mix, so like many of the Woodland Scenics landscaping products it's easy to use.

To start, mix one part water with the Smooth-It. Try not to mix it too vigorously or a lot of bubbles will be created. Then let it rest a couple of minutes. To apply, first lightly sand the road and sidewalk areas. Light sanding gives the surface hook, or something for the product to grab onto. Brush — you can even pour it in place — the Smooth-It where it's wanted, and walk away. Over time Smooth-It will self-level and when it's set, it's the perfect texture for concrete. This can then be coated with Woodland Scenics Top-Coat and the final touch can be added with Roadway Pens, but I'm jumping ahead. We'll get into this later, once all the plaster work is complete.

Now that Main St. is mostly sorted out, it's time to move onto the next part of the project, the area that I think is the best part of modeling a railroad layout, and that is creating terrain. There will be a number of different products used, but in my opinion, one of the best is Woodland's Shaper Sheet. This is a newer product, and if you've not used it, or seen it used, your rail and diorama customers will rave about the stuff. To create Shaper Sheet, Woodland Scenics has laminated a heavy gauge aluminum



foil with a thin plastic film and a fuzzy surface material all combined into a single sheet. The aluminum foil is just the right stiffness for creating terrain detail. The white plastic layer provides a uniform waterproof base that prevents colors from bleeding, and the fuzzy layer allows plaster to adhere properly.

The goal is to create some terrain from the rear side of Main St. to the edge of the tracks at the back of the board. To begin, Woodland's four-inch support panels were roughly cut to size, and when in position they were adhered to the layout board with a combination of Scenic glue for a secure connection to the surface along with a dab of hot glue for a quick tack. The supports were then more or less cut to the same height as the elevated Main St. (there's no science here; it's what looks pleasing to the eye), thus giving us a platform for the undulating terrain.

Now it's time to add the Shaper Sheet. As mentioned, this is a very cool product. The foil backing is plenty strong enough to hold its shape without using layer upon layer of crumpled newspaper to provide support. Cut an oversized piece of Shaper Sheet and start folding and bending to get the wanted undulations. To keep everything looking good for future placement, the houses were kept handy while bending and adjusting the Shaper Sheet so they would be situated on a fairly level surface when it is time for them to be permanently mounted.

Once satisfied with the overall shape, the magic begins. With a plaster brush and Shaper Plaster mixed at a two-to-



*The real magic begins once plaster has been brushed onto the Shaper Sheet, thus providing a smooth base for detailing.*



one ratio with water, brush it onto the fuzzy side of the Shaper Sheet. It quickly fills the material and when it cures, it leaves a very stiff structure. For this area of the layout, two light coats of Shaper Plaster were applied. To blend the transition from the terrain to Main St., strips of plaster cloth were used. Plaster cloth was also used to bridge the edge of the Shaper Sheet with the back of the layout board.

To prepare the front industrial area, sheets of plaster cloth were cut to fit between the tracks. This was done to provide a uniform surface and to smooth the transition from the industrial yard to the track bed. After the plaster cloth has cured, the material's texture is plainly visible. With most terrain, a brush and a thin coat of plaster could be used to mask the texture. But we're looking for an industrial looking gravel base, so it's back to Woodland's Smooth-It. This

*Thanks to some great scenery products, we are moving again on the N-scale layout.*

was floated onto the plaster cloth and allowed to cure.

Believe it or not, all the plaster work was done in four evenings (don't tell the editor — he's a slave driver). That was the quickest I've ever created layout terrain, and I'm hooked! The

Shaper Sheet, Hot Glue, Pre-cut and ready-to-use Plaster Cloth are easy and quick to apply. The Plaster formulas that Woodland Scenics has developed cure quickly, allowing for rapid progress, but not so quickly that they harden in the tray and the user is throwing out wasted products.

After a bit of a lull we're once again making progress, but that's what happens with many of the hobbies we enjoy. Between now and next time we visit the layout, a rim will have been added to the perimeter. And then it'll be time to start adding all of the grasses, rocks, trees and color that transform a layout and make it spring to life. **HM**

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