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## Our cover story



1. Huntington & Hartford Mike no. 103 has just finished taking on coal on Bob Collett's HO scale railroad. Bob built the coal tower from a Sheepscot kit; the 2-8-2 is a Sunset brass import detailed and painted by his late friend Bob Evans.



2. Bob detailed and painted the PA-1s. Though the station is Faller's Bonn Station, a German prototype, it looks right at home in Connecticut.

# The HO scale Huntington & Hartford

Craftsman kit structures highlight this eastern short line

BY BOB COLLETT

PHOTOS BY LOU SASSI

**M**y passions in model railroading are constructing superdetailed structures, both scratchbuilt and kits, and creating scenery that really captures the look of Connecticut and New England. Building the structures takes a lot of time, but the result is well worth the effort. Many of these would now be collector's items if I'd left them in their boxes, but I like them a lot better this way.

I've tried to make my scenes as believable as possible through highly detailed structures and scenery. The detailing includes not only the structures but lots of clutter around them.

Rather than distract from the trains, I find this level of scenery and structure detailing makes the railroad stand out even more.

## New beginnings

In August of 1985 my son Scott said, "Dad, let's fix up the railroad." The railroad he was talking about had been ignored for almost eight years, and "fixing it up" turned out to mean dismantling it and beginning anew.

The Huntington & Hartford, otherwise known as the Nutmeg Line, is a 16 x 24-foot, fictitious Connecticut short line that interchanges in Hartford with

the New Haven and with the Boston & Maine in Waterbury. The latter connection is pure modeler's license and is only represented by a hidden staging area. The time period is the mid-fifties when steam and diesel could still be found together.

Since the New Haven is a major owner of the H&H, it has trackage rights over the line, running both through trains and way freights that switch industries along the way.

## Design parameters

The H&H was designed with several goals in mind. Though I love structures,



3. Jack 'N Jill's Diner and the Depot News are two of Bob's favorite buildings. The diner follows one on George Sellios' Franklin & South Manchester RR.

I didn't see the railroad as a showcase for them. This was to be an operating railroad. To that end I wanted to minimize places where trains passed through a scene more than once, and I wanted to give the impression that my trains were going somewhere – the "beyond the basement walls" concept.

For ease of operation, I wanted all areas of the railroad easily accessible, so most of the main line runs within easy reach of the edge of the layout. That requirement dictated the E shape of the layout. Having the main control panel at the end of the center peninsula allows most of the railroad to be in view.

The aisles, except at the entry area, offer plenty of room for several people during operating sessions. I would have liked the entry area to the aisles wider, but political considerations (encroachment on the laundry area), and location of the floor support column (center of the helix), prevented making the layout any wider.

#### City . . .

The use of many people and vehicles on the H&H greatly contributes to the real-life feel of the scenes. Preiser sells several large sets of unpainted figures at reasonable prices. A couple of enjoyable evenings in front of the TV with a good quality, fine-tipped brush and you can populate a railroad very quickly.

I airbrush these figures with Floquil Flesh as a primer coat a week or so before painting the details, and after detail painting, weather them with a weak wash of India ink and rubbing alcohol (1/4 teaspoon to a pint).

Realistic-looking roads were always a challenge until John Elwood, one of the best structure and scenery modelers I know, perfected a technique for the most realistic concrete roads I've ever seen on a model railroad.

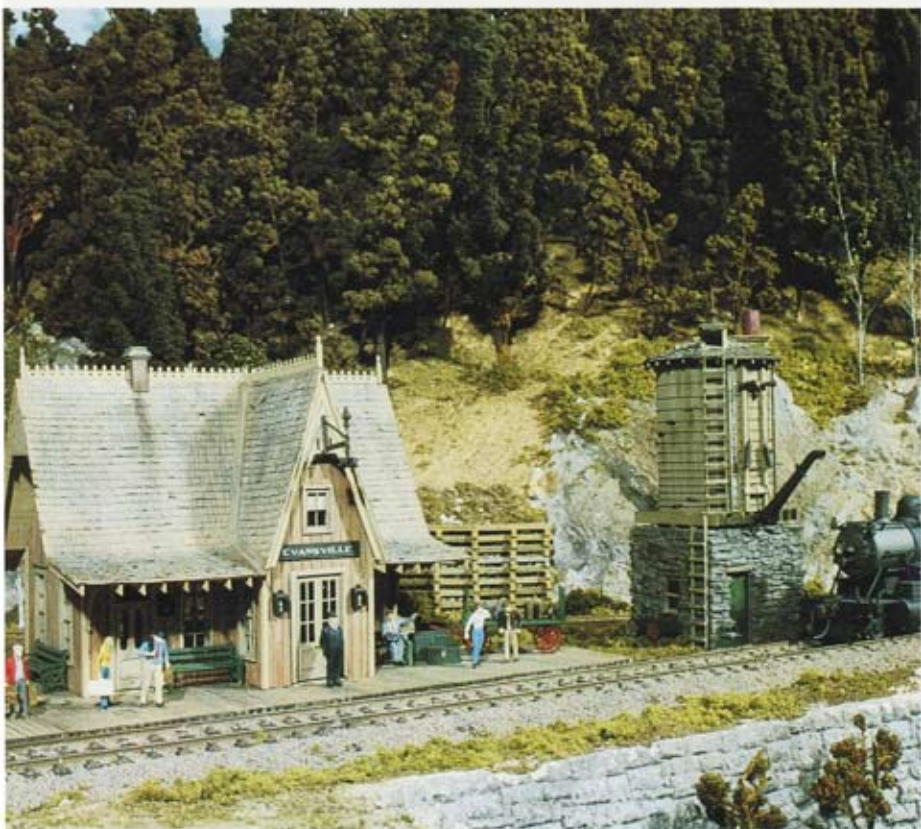
After building forms of 1/16"-square stripwood, I thin Savogran's Wood Putty (approximately 1 part water to 1 1/2 parts Savogran) and pour it into the forms, much like you would real

#### The layout at a glance

**Name:** Huntington & Hartford RR  
**Scale:** HO (1:87)  
**Size:** 16 x 24 feet  
**Theme:** short line  
**Locale:** Connecticut  
**Era:** mid-fifties  
**Layout style:** walkaround  
**Layout heights:** 44" to 56"  
**Benchwork:** L-girder  
**Roadbed:** 1/2" Homasote on 1/2" plywood  
**Track:** code 100 on main line, code 83 on sidings and White Hills Logging line  
**Turnouts:** no. 6  
**Minimum curve radii:** 30" on main line, 20" on industrial track  
**Maximum grade:** 1.5 percent  
**Scenery construction:** hardshell  
**Backdrop:** Masonite  
**Control:** block control



Illustration by Rick Johnson



4. The eastbound *Nutmegger* stops for passengers at Evansville station, built from a Sequoia kit. The water tank is from Fine Scale Miniatures. Number 420 is a New England Rail Service brass import.



5. The H&H picked up 0-6-0 no. 3 from the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha. The model's a PFM import. Bob built Gerrard J. Willikers wholesale machinery from a Fine Scale Miniatures kit.

concrete. After allowing several days for the material to dry, it can be sanded and carved to represent the cracks and expansion joints of a concrete road. For a weathered effect, I brush the roads with charcoal powder (made by rubbing briquettes on sandpaper), and in some cases an extremely light wash of India ink. Finally I paint lane markers.

The city structures include kits from Magnuson, Fine Scale Miniatures, City Classics, and Design Preservation Models. Yard structures include Sheepscot, New England Structures, FSM, and Crow River models. Rural areas include kits by FSM, Sheepscot, South River Model Works, Builders in Scale, Campbell, and others. There are also several

small scratchbuilt structures. I kitbashed the building flats along the wall at the back of Hartford.

Two of my favorite structures in Hartford are scratchbuilt. The Jack 'N Jill Diner, named after my wife and daughter, started life as a Roundhouse Pullman Palace Sleeper, kit no. 6081, which I cut in half. I scratchbuilt the rest of the structure and the produce shed. My other favorite is the Depot News, which provides Hartford passengers with their morning newspaper and cup of coffee.

#### ... and country

Scenery construction is hardshell over cardboard webbing. This basic surface is finished with different

shades of finely sifted real dirt – light dirt for most earth and a yellowish-tan soil found in a construction area for dirt roads. I use a tea strainer for sifting most dirt and will sometimes use a discarded nylon stocking to sift some really fine stuff.

To achieve the heavy New England ground cover effect, Woodland Scenics coarse foam and foliage clusters are used extensively. I was also fortunate enough to find a package of Scentare, a scenery grass mat product to simulate field grass. This product is no longer manufactured. I hope someone picks it up and makes it available again, as it is truly realistic looking.

Most rockwork is made by casting molding plaster in latex molds and



applying them wet to conform to the base scenery. Some of the rocks, as well as tunnel portals and other individual scenery features, are blended together using Sculptamold.

All the trees are made from weeds, mostly meadowsweet and slender leaf goldenrod. For most of the trees that comprise the heavily forested areas, I take a handful of meadowsweet stems, dip them in a pailful of 50/50 white glue and water, shake off the excess glue, then cover them with cupfuls of Woodland Scenics Green Grass.

After shaking off the excess foam, I dip the top of the finished tree into a small box of Woodland Scenics Burnt Grass to achieve a dappled sunlight effect. This is a fast and inexpensive

way to make trees. It takes only an hour and one small bag of green grass to make about a hundred trees.

I made the foreground trees by wrapping brown floral tape around several weeds to form the trunk and branches. Then I sprayed them with hair spray and sprinkled on grass or coarse light green foam. I'm in the process of going back to all my larger trees at the edge of the layout and adding a bark texture over the floral tape by covering it with Durham's Water Putty and painting with Floquil's Reefer Gray and Roof Brown.

I used Enviro-Tex for the larger bodies of water on the layout and acrylic gloss medium for streams. I added a finishing coat of Tamiya Clear Gloss

Acrylic to gloss medium streams. The advantage of using the gloss medium for streams is that it doesn't run downhill as much as the Enviro-Tex.

Most of the backdrop is Masonite which I painted with blue latex house paint. However, the backdrop behind the mountain scenery of the helix has only a two-foot radius, so I used .040" styrene sheet which can make a tight bend but still won't ripple. Behind the city of Hartford I just painted the bare concrete wall, but were I to do it again, I'd cover the wall with Masonite.

#### **Bench and trackwork**

The main line is just short of four scale miles long. The track level in Hartford is 44 inches above the floor,



climbing to 55 inches at Evansville, which still allows a maximum ruling grade of only 1.5 percent.

Underpinning the layout is L-girder benchwork, the flexibility of which became evident when the original grade up to Huntington proved too steep for the 25-car freights I planned to operate. I was able to drop the elevation an inch with minimal effort.

The triple helix allows trains to climb from Hartford to Evansville, enter a tunnel, then descend the helix to either enter the double-ended storage area at Waterbury or continue on the main to White Hills. This provides almost a foot of separation between the upper and lower mains, enough to keep the scenes visually separate.

I painted all my track with Pactra Light Earth to give a brown/rust effect on the rails and ties. Then I painted the ties with Floquil Oak, touching some of them with Driftwood for an even more weathered effect.

### Control

Two MRC 2500 Tech II power packs supply power to the main line, which is wired for cab control. One person (me) can operate the whole railroad from the main control panel. In addition, there are handheld controls powered from the same two packs that allow walkaround control.

Each town and its industrial and yard areas can also be operated from separately powered handheld MRC Cab Control no. 55 transistorized throttles. Most of the blocks are controlled by rotary switches which connect them to either of the mainline cabs or the local cab.

Recently I installed one of Aristocraft's new wireless radio-controlled handheld throttles in place of one of my tethered ones. This device only took a few minutes to install, but it added an exciting new dimension to operating. If you haven't tried out radio control, I encourage you to do so.

### Equipment and operation

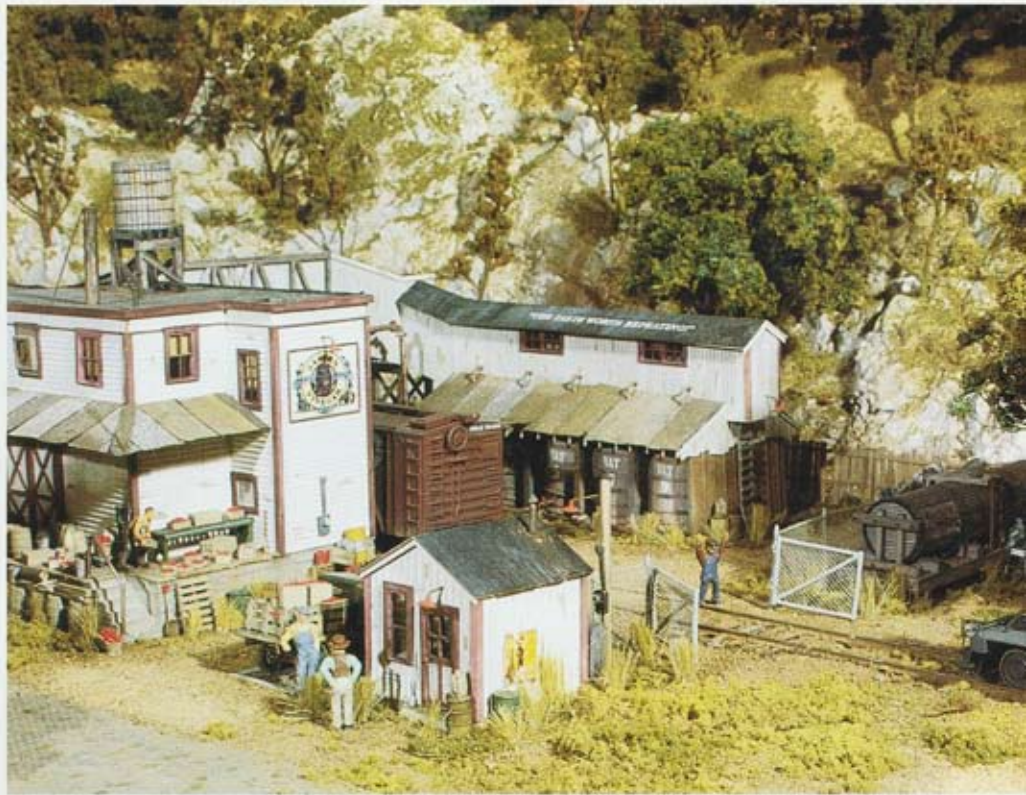
Huntington & Hartford power is primarily small brass steam engines. New Haven power is both brass steam and first-generation plastic diesels from Athearn, Atlas, and some Front Range bodies on Proto Power West chassis. The Boston & Maine is represented by a single Sunset Consolidation.

Rolling stock is mostly shake the box but with a few craftsman kits as well. The H&H cabooses are old Silver Streak wood kits and the passenger cars are old Walthers kits. The New Haven passenger cars are from E&B Valley kits.

The railroad was designed for realistic operation with industries from each town supplying other customers on the railroad. The interchanges with the New Haven and B&M provide lots of remote traffic as well.

I'm still experimenting with car routing systems. So far I've used both card systems and software on my PC. Each





6. Some local industries are served directly by the New Haven RR. In this case it's Mogul no. 420 taking time off from the *Nutmegger*. The vinegar works was built by the author from a Builders in Scale kit.

7. The passengers at Huntington are served by this Fine Scale Miniatures station that Bob built over 20 years ago.

has its advantages. As I operate more I'll choose the one that works best for our crew of engineers and conductors and go from there.

#### Happiness is . . .

This great hobby of ours has given me many happy hours of modeling, providing a challenge to improve skills and techniques as well as serving as an outlet for the stress of the modern day business world.

One of the best parts of the hobby, however, is the people who are in it. Our round robin group, "The Friday Knights of The Road," has provided many enjoyable evenings as well as inspiration and help in building the Huntington & Hartford.

John Adriani convinced me to start the current-day H&H and has helped tremendously with the electrical aspect. John Elwood has been a mentor in structures and scenery. Vic Dowd, who is a free-lance illustrator,

has offered many suggestions on the best use of color to achieve realistic effects. John Klotz's expertise in making videos of our railroads helps us see what needs to be improved. And Gene Griffin, who has a scrupulous eye for

the small details as well as a quick wit, makes sure that the areas which need improvement get it.

The Valley HO Trak modular club to which I belong has also provided many happy hours of camaraderie. ☺

### Meet Bob Collett

**B**ob had both American Flyer and Lionel trains as a child, but his serious modeling began in college when his roommate got him started building Athearn and Vamey HO kits. Some of those cars are still in service on the H&H.

Bob's wife, Jackie, supports his hobby activities, accompanying him on railfan excursions and even weed-gathering expeditions for tree material. His two grown children are always eager to see what's new on the H&H when they come to visit.

After many years of a 100-mile commute to his marketing job with IBM, Bob has decided to strike out on his own so that he has more time for family and hobby.

