N-Circle Railroad Update 31 – February 27, 2026

Building Laser-Cut Wood Kits for Rail Yards

This is a continuation of N-Circle Update 30, discussing building a set of six laser-cut wood kits for use in rail yards. Some will be used on T-Trak modules for the NWV Model Railroad Association, the others on the N-Circle Railroad layout.

In Update 30 we built three from JL Innovative Design:

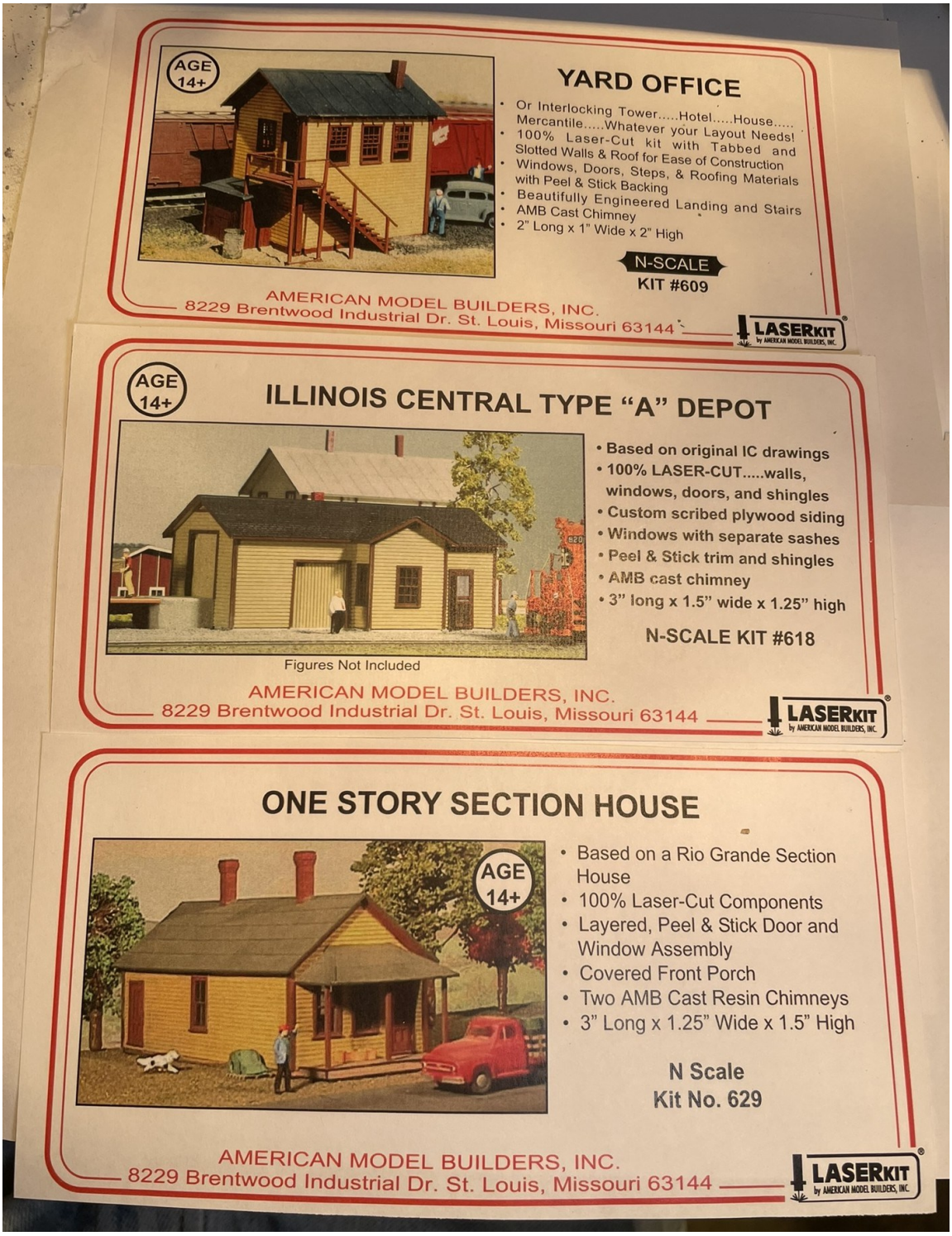
- Bagwell Junction Tower - Kit 290
- East Junction Yard Office – Kit 450
- Michigan Avenue Tower - Kit 570

Now we will build the three from American Model Builders:

- Yard Office Building - Kit 609
- Illinois Central Type “A” Depot - Kit 618
- One Story Section House – Kit 629

Here we see the American Model Builders packaging photos for the three kits for reference.

N-Circle_25-11-29_AMB_Railyards_Cropped



These kits were produced from around 2008 to 2011, the similar timeframe as the JLI kits in Update 30. The copyright on the Yard Office instructions is 2011, but some of the diagrams are dated 1996. I believe that American Model Builders is no longer in production, but most of their kits can be found on eBay or at some hobby suppliers.

The AMB kits provide laser-cut walls and the windows, doors and trim are laser-cut wood peel-and stick, like their Country Barn kit described in N-Circle Update 24.

The instructions are clear and complete; they have minimal words but show the assembly sequence mostly with detailed diagrams.

Unlike the three JL Innovative Design kits discussed in Update 30, these three American Model Builders kits had mostly similar parts, with laser-cut main walls and peel-and-stick trim pieces.

As with the JLI rail yard kits, I painted all the structures with Polly Scale acrylic Reefer Yellow walls and Polly Scale acrylic Vermont Green trim, consistent with the other railroad buildings on the N-Circle Railroad layout and the NWV Railroad colors. Both originate from the colors of the Central Vermont Railway.

While there are differences in the recommended assembly sequences among the three AMB kits, in general, like most wood kits, the instructions say to assemble the main walls first, but I prefer to paint the walls and doors and windows first, then attach the doors and windows to the walls before the full assembly.

I used Polly Scale Reefer Yellow acrylic paint on the exterior of the walls. As with the wood kits in previous N-Circle Updates, I just applied water to the backside of the sections to reduce warping before brushing the acrylic paint on the front. The tall walls of the Yard Office started to warp some and had to be pressed flat under a weight to dry. I painted the walls for the Depot and Section House while still in their sprue sheets, so they were less prone to warping.

AMB - Railroad Yard Office – Kit 609

I started with the Yard Office kit, as a follow-on to the two JLI yard tower kits built in Update 30, to compare and contrast the kits. However, this is not really a yard tower, as it does not have the large windows for overseeing a yard. But with its external staircase, it is a very similar kit to build as the two JLI towers.

Contrary to the instructions again, I assembled the windows and doors and glued them into the walls before assembling the main structure.

Cutting the windows and doors and trim pieces from the thin wood sprue sheets requires a lot of care and patience. I started with a brand-new sharp point Exacto knife blade, but still cutting along the extremely thin and fragile window frames without damaging them was a challenge.

As with other laser-cut wood kits, you have to paint the outer edges of the trim pieces after they are cut from the wood sprue sheets. I did the sides and tops; the bottom edges will not be visible when the structure is complete and on the layout. This eliminates one turn of rotating these tiny pieces to paint! I did not paint the outer edges of the window sashes, as they will be surrounded by the opening in the wall.

There are two window sash pieces for the windows, so they can be assembled to be closed or to have the lower section raised so the bottom half is open. I did two of the eleven open, so they can get some air on that hot second floor! Assembling these is quite tricky, as you have to peel the backing off one window frame, then stick it to the other. I used the tip of a sharp point Exacto knife to get the backing off – nonetheless, getting it off without distorting the shape of the window sash is a challenge: this photo shows examples where I was not always totally successful.

N-Circle_26-01-15_AMB_YardOffice_Cropped

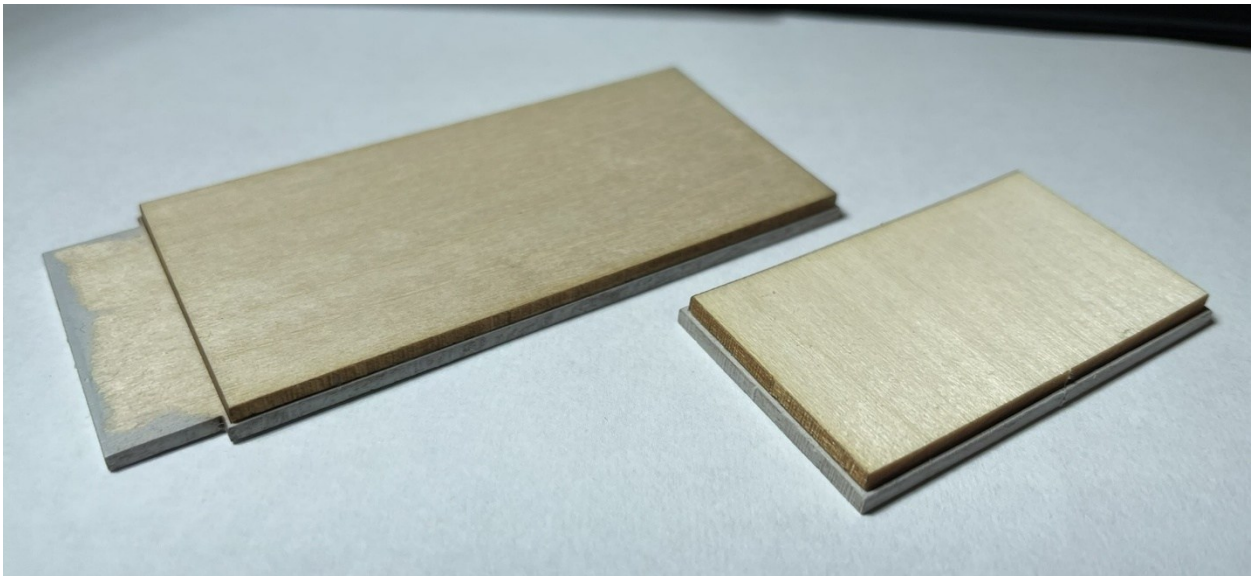
The window glaze in this kit is laser-cut to size for the two window sizes for the doors and windows. It comes with protective paper on one side, which must be carefully removed with the sharp tip of a knife – not an easy task. I attached the glaze with Micro-Scale Kristal Klear. If you have some of the lower window sashes up to create an open window, remember to cut off the lower half of the glaze first – I didn't, cutting the glaze after it is on the window is not recommended!

Contrary to the kit instructions, I put the doors and windows into the wall openings first and applied the external trim pieces later. This allowed pressing the windows into the openings and correcting some of the frame distortion issues, though not completely. I put white glue around the wall openings before pressing in the window units, being apprehensive that the peel-and-stick outer window trim would be adequate to hold them in place.

Note that the kit only provides the exact number of window and door trim pieces needed, no extras, so there is no allowance for losing or damaging one of these pieces!

The two-layer design of the floor is interesting; I had not seen this design style before. Here we see the floor for the Yard Office in the foreground and the floor for the larger Section House in the rear, after gluing the two pieces together. I painted the outer edges of the lower sections earlier to look like a concrete foundation under the buildings. Note that the edges of the wood bases totally soaked up grey acrylic paint, I had to go over them multiple times to cover the brown edge. I had never seen a wood surface absorb paint like that.

N-Circle_26-01-17_AMB_YardOffice_1_Cropped



The instructions say to assemble the four walls first, then insert the floor. However, I intended to glue the walls to the floor at the same time as assembling the corners. This would provide a perfect alignment of the walls to be square and eliminate the possible frustration of the floor not fitting into the walls after they are glued together.

I started with the most difficult corner between the upper-level door and the wall with the staircase. But these walls were slightly warped from the painting and there are multiple notches to align. Getting this square and upright on the base proved to be too difficult with the alignment tools I had available. Therefore, I placed the front wall over a plastic storage box of the same height as the end wall, aligned the end wall to it, then weighed down the wall with a bottle of glue to straighten the warp and used magnets to hold the end wall against it, as seen here.

N-Circle_26-01-17_AMB_YardOffice_2_Cropped

Adding the remaining two walls and gluing the whole structure to the base a few hours later was easier, the notches of the first two walls held these straight and corrected the warping without having to clamp the structure to dry.

So, while the ends of the walls are notched, and thus easier to align securely than the JLI kits of the previous three rail yard structures in Update 30, I would not say it was “easy” for this kit. It was easier for the other two AMB kits discussed below.

I added an interior floor cut from cardboard and held by the top of the interior corner shims seen here. I did not add interior details, as there is very limited visibility through the few windows. But the floor provides a view block, so light from the first-floor windows cannot be seen through the second-floor windows and vice versa.

N-Circle_26-01-17_AMB_YardOffice_3

I attached the corner trim using white glue, rather than the peel-and-stick. The paper backing on the peel-and stick was very tight, perhaps because of the age of the kit, and I was concerned about breaking these thin wood pieces when removing it. Also, it is soooo much easier to slide the pieces into the precise positions required in wet glue than with the “stick-on” process.

The end trim boards are to be attached first, then the side boards overlap them at the corners. I let the ends dry first before adding the sides, so as not to dislodge the ends during the process. They meet at the corners reasonably well, though with some gaps, which I filled with white glue during the attachment, to be covered with green touchup paint later.

I also attached the door and window trim with white glue, without removing the peel-and-stick paper backing. Perhaps it is my own ineptitude, but I cannot imagine using the peel-and-stick, which in my experience immediately adheres to wherever a piece is initially placed and does not want to move. It is much easier to be able to slide the frame into exact positioning around the window sash when there is a row of windows that you want to look straight!

Unlike the previous two JLI Yard Tower kits, the exterior staircase for this structure must be built after the main structure is assembled, as it rests on supports which align to holes in the structure walls. I suspected that if I tried to build the staircase separately, there may be problems with final alignment of these supports.

The triangle pieces that support the stairway are very fragile. Even using the sharpest new hobby knife, a couple of them broke while cutting them from the plate and handling them. Fortunately, they will not be too noticeable under the stairway. The tabs on them were a bit too long to fit into the slots on the wall and had to be trimmed – again with the very sharp point of a knife. So, test these before gluing.

Attaching the two-panel upper landing can be more of a challenge than anticipated. While it just rests on the triangular supports, I found that I had attached the corner trim board on the long wall just a whisker too low, so the landing would not fit under it. So more careful trimming… I assume the landing is made of two pieces so that the lower piece looks like framing to support the scribed decking boards of the upper piece. Thus, it is important to know which-is-which before you start, and make sure the scribed side ends up on top.

Once more, not following the instructions, I did not attach the corner trim boards under the stairway until after the triangular support was dried in place. This made it much easier to know exactly how high the boards could be placed to be snug under the support.

Gluing the inner staircase stringer in place against the wall was straightforward. Gluing the outer stringer is more of a challenge, as it does not align solidly against anything, it just balances on the two support brackets and the bottom landing. You have to make sure that it is vertical and that the steps align to the inner stringer, to allow adding the treads later. But with care and patience it can be done. I tacked it in place with small drops of wood glue initially, then after they were dry, added more glue around the contact points.

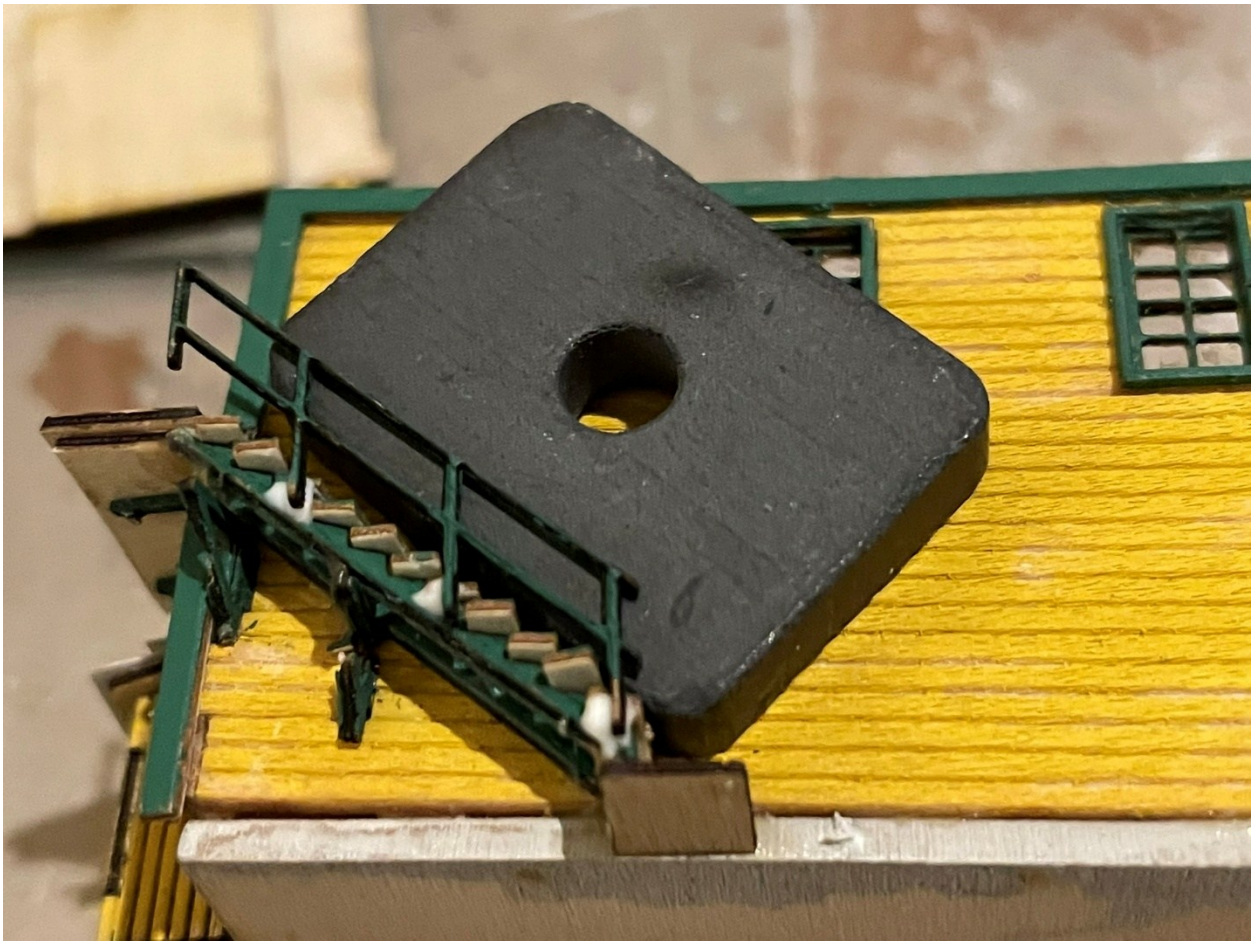
This kit requires individually placed stair treads like the Majestic Theater kit by Branchline in Update 25! I did not attempt their peel-and-stick technique. I left the paper backing on the treads and placed a tiny drop of white glue on the two stringers before placing a tread using a pair of fine point needle nose pliers. I used the tip of a hobby knife to then slide the tread into its exact final alignment. (This would not be possible with peel-and-stick, the tread would just stick to your pliers…)

Note the careful placement of the three treads with notches, to align to the handrail posts. The instructions show the proper order for placing these, which helps, as the scribed alignment line on the side of the stringer is not easy to see.

While the staircase came out okay, it certainly required more work than the plastic stairways in the JLI yard tower kits…!

The next step is to add the handrails around the staircase and upper landing, starting with the angled section on the side of the stars. This presents a challenge, as there is nothing to hold it in place while the glue dries. I laid the building on its side and determined that my alignment magnets were just the width of the staircase. So you see here one of the magnets used to support the rail while the three little drops of glue dry.

N-Circle_26-01-23_AMB_YardOffice_2



At this point I found that my understanding of the alignment of the upper landing was wrong… While it needed to fit under the trim board, it apparently should not be placed snug against the corner of the building but rather should extend past the end more. This became apparent because the top post of the railing aligned to the outside edge of the staircase did not land on the landing but rather was hanging in space. The instructions provide no guidance on this, and the only way to anticipate this would be to measure the width of the staircase components before assembling them. Though in retrospect, it appears that the outer end of the upper landing should have extended out to the outer end of the triangular supports, which define the width of the staircase. Recognize that this placement would then leave a gap between the inner corner of the landing and the building wall, an obvious safety hazard, so one would not expect this to be the design.

Here we see the misplaced landing:

N-Circle_26-01-24_AMB_YardOffice_1

Given that this structure may be used for public display on an NWV Model Railroad Association T-Trak module and I didn't want it to look like it was assembled during "The N-Scale Amateur Hour," I decided to add an extension to the landing, using scrap pieces cut from the wood sprues that the parts come in. I cut two narrow slats to equal the thickness of the two-layer landing and glued them onto a third wider piece to extend under the underside of the landing to provide more gluing surface. I also scribed lines in the surface with a hobby knife to replicate the scribed boards on the landing. Here you see this tiny structure drying as it rests against the end of a wood toothpick.

N-Circle_26-01-24_AMB_YardOffice_2_Cropped

After it was dry, I then glued it into position on the landing, as seen here.

N-Circle_26-01-24_AMB_YardOffice_3_Cropped

Touchup paint to be applied later hopefully will blend the platform sections together visually.

The next step was to determine how the railings would fit around this structure… Fortunately, these pre-cut pieces could still be used with the modified landing. The side railings are attached first, then the main center railing. To hold the first side railing at the top of the stairs during gluing required creativity. As seen as this photo, I supported the building on its side on one of the rectangular magnets, as we saw above the magnet is the thickness of the stairway. I then cut a couple of pieces from the leftover frames for the trim parts to raise the railing slightly to align with the stairway railing, which is in a bit from the end of the landing. I used superglue to attach the railings for a hopefully faster and stronger bond of the three tiny glue joints.

N-Circle_26-01-24_AMB_YardOffice_4_Cropped

Adding the other two railing sections was reasonably easy. I attached the other end railing first, again using superglue and a piece of scrap wood to rest it against to keep it vertical. After it was dry, I placed the building on end, and the large railing section could be laid across and held by the end railings.

I made two planters to place in the corners of the upper landing cut from a 1/8-inch (4 mm) wood dowel and painted black. I tried using a red Sharpie pen to add flowers to tufts of green scenery foam for the planters but that didn't work, it did not create a bright color, so I had to use red paint. I glued the planters into the corners of the landings against the railings, they stabilize these very fragile railings and disguise the patch to the length of the landing.

N-Circle_26-02-19_AMB_YardOffice

The lesson here is that yes, it is easy to make mistakes when building these wood kits. But with a little creativity it is usually possible to recover to where the initial mistake will not be visually obvious when the structure is placed on a layout.

Assembling the staircase for this kit was at least as challenging as for the two JLI yard towers in N-Circle Update 30, though in different ways.

The kit did not come with corner trim boards for the coal bin under the upper landing, so I added some to cover the notches in the walls joint, which can be seen in the photos above and would be difficult to disguise with just the yellow walls paint. The dividers between the windows in the sprue sheet were just the right width, so I cut four lengths from them. Again: Never throw away those scrap pieces prematurely!

The roofing for this structure is solid wood panels, which you overlay with strips of paper to be painted black to look like tarpaper. The instructions say you can allow the roof to be removable by only applying glue to the joint between the two panels. However, I suspect this would only be workable if the tabs on the tops of the walls were significantly trimmed before assembling the walls, to allow a loose fit into the slots in the panels. I found that due to slight warpage inwards of the tops of the end walls, some pressure was required on the walls to align both tabs and press them on. Once the first panel was in place the walls were aligned so that the second could be added relatively easily. But if the roof were removed as suggested, it would be a trick to align the tabs to put it back on, given no visibility of the slots in the panels after the roofing material is applied. And that single glued joint at the peak would be easily broken during any handling. Given that I did not add any interior details or lighting to this structure, I did not foresee a need to ever remove the roof and glued it securely on all sides.

I ended up finishing the roofing for the Section House kit before this Yard Office kit, so see that discussion below, as the two kits use the same peel-and-stick approach. However, this Yard Office did not have scribed lines in the wood panels, so you are on your own to get the strips on straight.

The chimney is a long piece of resin plastic that fits through the hole in the roof. I painted and weathered the chimneys for all three AMB kits first, then since the pieces are longer than needed, I sawed them in half creating more chimneys for use elsewhere.

But adding the chimney presents a special challenge. The kit instructions simply say: “glue the chimney in place.” But if you accidentally drop it through the hole in the roof, you will never get it out again, because at this point the base is already glued to the building. And how to ensure that it is perfectly vertical? After pondering this a while, I came up with using a configurable parts holder I had purchased years ago and rarely used, but this was the perfect time. I padded the alligator clip clamp with soft foam to not damage the plastic chimney. I set up the holder to align the chimney vertically in the hole, then lifted the whole unit out, applied superglue around the hole edges and inserted the chimney back in, pressed against the glued edges. This photo shows the clamping as the glue dries.

N-Circle_26-02-22_AMB_YardOffice

To finish off the small gaps around the chimney I added flashing cut from narrow strips of regular kitchen aluminum foil. The foil is difficult to work with at this size, so I cut the strips along the straight edge of a piece of glass, holding the knife blade as horizontal as possible to minimize crinkling the foil. I then placed the strip between two plates of glass to create a folded crease along the length, before cutting it to the 4 mm lengths needed for the sides of the chimney. I placed it with the less shiny surface up, to make it look more weathered.

N-Circle_26-02-23_AMB_YardOffice_Cropped

Here we see the finished flashing on the Yard Office:

N-Circle_26-02-24_AMB_YardOffice_1
N-Circle_26-02-24_AMB_YardOffice_2

I did not add flashing to the Section House, as its two chimneys didn't really need it. But I did to the Depot as you will see in that section below and here, as it had the worst gaps around the chimney.

N-Circle_26-02-24_AMB_Depot_1
N-Circle_26-02-24_AMB_Depot_2

I am not sure this was my most successful modeling experiment… We will see how well the superglue holds the foil in place over time. Nonetheless, this funky flashing helps to distract from the fact that the chimneys did not end up perfectly vertical – another example of "disguising" modeling mistakes!

Nonetheless, here are closeup photos of the completed Yard Office kit:

N-Circle_26-02-26_AMB_YardOffice_1_Cropped
N-Circle_26-02-26_AMB_YardOffice_2_Cropped

This AMB yard office required almost 10 hours to complete over 40 sessions, including the extra detailing of the planters and chimney flashing. Obviously many of those sessions were only a few minutes each, where I performed the same task on all three AMB kits in one sitting. Assembling the staircase required many short sessions to glue parts in place and allow them to set before attaching the next connecting piece(s). This compares to the 12 hours required for the JLI Bagwell Junction Tower kit and 8 hours for the JLI Michigan Avenue Tower kit described in the previous N-Circle Update 30 report. And the 12 hours for the simpler Atlas plastic Yard Tower in N-Circle Update 21, though about four of those hours were for adding the signage and details, so actual assembly of the kit was about 8 hours.

AMB – One Story Section House – Kit 629

Assembly of the Section House was very similar to the Yard Office above and is a simpler structure. It uses the same two-piece window sashes structures and thus presents the same challenge to align and stick them together without distorting them. Again, I glued them into the wall openings with white glue and did not rely on the peel-and-stick to hold them. I applied the glaze from the rear with Micro-Scale Kristal Klear, then applied the trim after assembling the walls. This kit uses the same kind of laser-cut window glaze pieces as the Yard Office, with the protective paper that has to be removed. However, the glaze comes in two pieces for each window, so one has to be careful to keep them separate and insert the smaller piece into the recess of the outer sash. I of course lost one pane, but it was easily replaced by cutting a piece from the leftover glaze sheet that the panes were in. And after all the doors and windows were in place, I added the trim frames with white glue, as for the kit above.

This kit uses the same two-piece base design as the Yard Tower as was shown above. This time my original intent to glue the walls to the base while gluing the corners worked fine, as the walls were not as tall and warped as for the Yard Office above. Therefore, I would recommend this approach if possible.

Assembling the porch requires some care, but it is not overly complex. I assembled it in the opposite order of how it is described in the instructions. I added the three vertical support poles immediately after gluing the main U-shaped support member into the slots in the wall. This looked like it was going to be much easier than their description of “slip the three porch poles into place” with the roof structure hanging precariously off the building with no support and covering the notches in the upper support so they could not be seen. And I added the two triangular side roof panels first, as they align to slots in the wall as seen here:

N-Circle_26-01-19_AMB_SectionHouse_1_Cropped

I then added the large roof center panel, aligning the notches to the side panels. I don't know why they recommend gluing on the center panel first, as it would have no solid alignment points. I did end up with gaps at the corners as seen here, but I don't think that would be prevented using their assembly order. And the roofing will cover this defect.

N-Circle_26-01-19_AMB_SectionHouse_2_Cropped

Attaching the main roof panels should have been easy. However, the slots in the wood panels were not wide enough to accept the tabs on the top of the end walls. These cannot be forced with much pressure, as the end walls and tabs are thin and fragile, as can be seen in the photo above. Therefore, I had to trim the slots on both ends of both panels to get them to fit on. I used a sharp hobby knife and worked from the underside of the panels to bevel the opening of the narrow dimension of the slots wider, test fitting until they would go in place on both ends of the panels. Why these panels would not be manufactured with slightly loose slot tolerances for the roof is a mystery to me…

I attached the trim boards under the eaves and on the corners with white glue. Guiding them into place with the peel-and-stick technique would have been a challenge - maybe with fine-point needle-nose pliers and a very steady hand with very accurate first-shot placement it could be done adequately. With the white glue process, I allowed the first corner boards to dry and set before applying the second overlapping board, so as to not dislodge the first. There are gaps in some places where the wall corners were not aligned perfectly, but trim paint touchup applied later should disguise them.

The roofing for this kit is strips of peel-and-stick paper, to be painted to look like tarpaper. Separating the backing from the strips is a challenge, even using a sharp-point hobby knife, but applying the strips to the roofs is fairly easy. The scribe lines in the wood roof panels provide a nice guide for aligning the strips which I have not seen in other kits.

To attach the flashing strips to cover the peaks of roof sections, I aligned the strip over the peak, then used the tips of needle nose pliers to press the two sides down equally around the center crease, working along the length of the strip.

I placed the roofing strips so they all aligned to the edge of the roof on one end and overhung on the other. When done, I turned the building over and trimmed off the overhangs with a sharp knife running along the edge of the roof. I painted the roofs with acrylic Polly-Scale dark grey paint.

Installing the two chimneys on this kit introduced another challenge: I used the same process for the first one as for the Yard Office above, but that technique hides the exact height of the top of the chimney, so if you want the two chimneys on this building to be the same height and exactly aligned, another technique is needed for the second one. I ended up just using “the human clamp,” holding it in place until the superglue was set sufficiently to hold it. They actually ended up better aligned vertically than for the Yard Office above, and as discussed above, I did not add flashing around their much smaller gaps at the bases.

The instructions describe the Section House as an “easy to assemble kit that will only require an evening or two to complete.” I would judge this to be unrealistic if the building is painted and appropriate time is allowed for multiple painting and gluing sessions to dry. I found this kit required about 6 hours to complete over 22 sessions, with many sessions shared with the other two kits to reduce the total time for preparing paints and cleaning brushes, etc. Maybe if one only used Quick-Set superglue for everything…

AMB – Illinois Central Type “A” Depot – Kit 618

The Depot kit has additional complexity due to multiple configuration options and roof angles. It comes with two versions of the front and rear walls, so the passenger area can be located on either the right or left, with the freight area occupying the other end. Not knowing where the structure will be placed eventually on an NWV T-Trak module, I put the passenger area on the right relative to the front bay window area.

The instructions also describe an option to have a raised loading dock on the end, by cutting the freight door opening higher and adding a raised dock. However, the freight door on the front cannot be raised similarly, so it seemed inconsistent to have the two nearby doors to the same freight area at two different levels, so I left the end door at ground level.

The window sashes for this kit were even more thin and delicate than for the previous two kits. I attached the inner and outer sashes using white glue – yes, I ended up with a few spots of glue squeezed out on the visible side, but they dried clear and can be touched up with trim paint. But I can’t imagine trying to get the peel-and-stick backing off these sashes without destroying them. I damaged a couple just removing them from the source plate, even with using a very sharp new knife blade.

I blackened the fine screen for one door with a Sharpie per the instructions – that seemed to work fine.

Note that the instructions for this kit say to install the windows and doors into the walls before assembling the walls together, which is my usual process, but opposite from most of the wood kits discussed in previous N-Circle Updates. I did not install the window glaze on the inside of the sashes until they were dry in the walls – that seemed to be a safer process than attaching the glaze before putting the sashes in the walls, which is the sequence in the instructions.

The kit comes with two different style passenger doors, but only one door opening, so I used the screen door on the waiting room entry. And recognize that the two freight doors are attached with the scribe lines running vertically, perpendicular to the siding on the walls. They are glued to the inside of the walls and will fit into the notches in the upper layer of the base floor.

I attached the trim around the doors and windows using white glue, leaving the peel-and-stick paper backing on the parts, rather than risk damaging them in the removal process. As is typical with most wood kits, the instructions say to add these after assembling the walls, but I find it much easier to do with the walls still lying flat on the workbench. Of course, you need to wait until after assembling the walls to add the corner trim boards.

I have not included photos from these steps, as they would not be different from those for the similar steps for previous laser-cut wood kits in their N-Circle Updates.

The assembly of the main walls for this kit is somewhat unique, as the walls for the bay on the front extend into the building and must be square for everything to fit together correctly. The instructions say to attach these to the base, make sure they are square, then add the other walls later. However, I felt it better to use the notches in the front wall to align these sections at this point, rather than having to deal with a possible misalignment later.

What was not obvious in advance was that it required significant pressure to hold the front main wall down into the alignment slots of the bay side walls so that the bottom would engage completely with the base. To weight or clamp the tops of these fragile walls would have

required some advance planning, so I had to apply “the human clamp” for a while until the wood glue set.

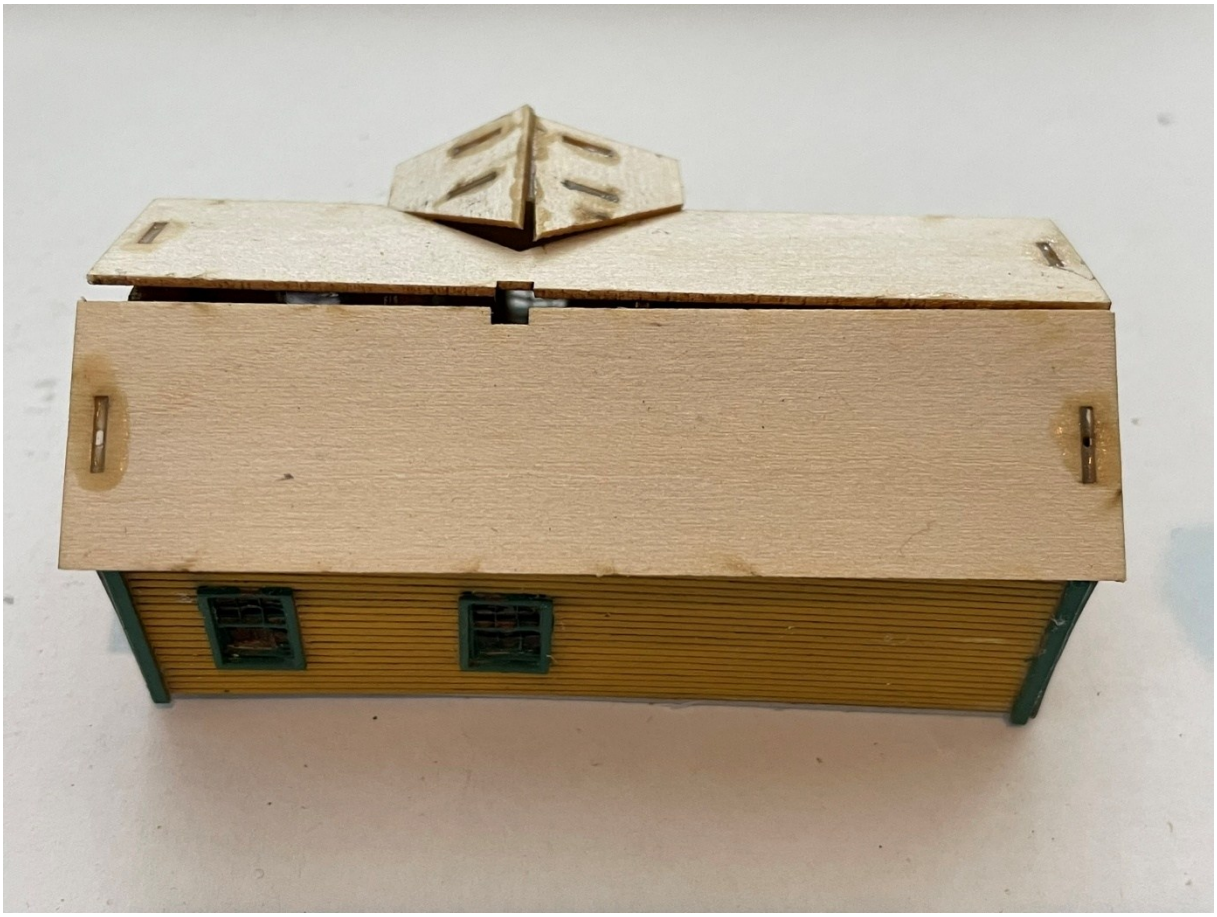
After these joints dried for a day, I added the two end walls. They went on reasonably easily, aligning the notches. However, I waited another day before adding the main rear wall, as trying to align its corner notches immediately would have surely dislodged the end walls if their joints were still wet.

The overlapping corner trim boards were similar to those in previous kits. As before, I attached them with white glue, not using the peel-and stick. Sliding them in place over the uneven corner joints is enough of a challenge in wet glue, I cannot imagine doing it with the trim piece wanting to grab and stick in place.

I did not attach the triangular trim pieces under the eaves on the ends and bay until after the roof panels were attached, so they could be aligned to cover any spaces between the walls and roof panels that might occur.

The two main roof panels went in place reasonably easily, requiring some pressure to spread the end walls outwards slightly to align the wall notches into the slots in the panels. The short, angled pieces over the bay window were more of a challenge. Despite the two closely spaced slots in the panels they did not align easily. I ended up with gaps between these panels and the main roof that will need to be bridged with the roofing material.

N-Circle_26-01-31_AMB_Depot



This Depot kit comes with long, narrow strips of scribed shingles peel-and-stick roofing, like the structures in N-Circle Updates 24 and 30. Remembering those experiences, this seemed like a good time to try the Chooch Enterprises HO/N Shake Roofing (Product No. 8920) that I purchased recently.

And now, another valuable lesson in “Measure twice, cut once…”

Given the roof panels come together at angles, one needs to be careful when cutting the roofing sections. Before attaching them to the structure, I placed each wood roof panel upper (scribed-side) face down on the backside of the roofing material, drew around them with a pencil as seen in the following photo, then cut around them with a sharp hobby knife. I started in from the material edge some, to get a good printing of the shingles. Chooch has a good video on their website showing how to work with this material.

N-Circle_26-01-30_AMB_Depot_Cropped

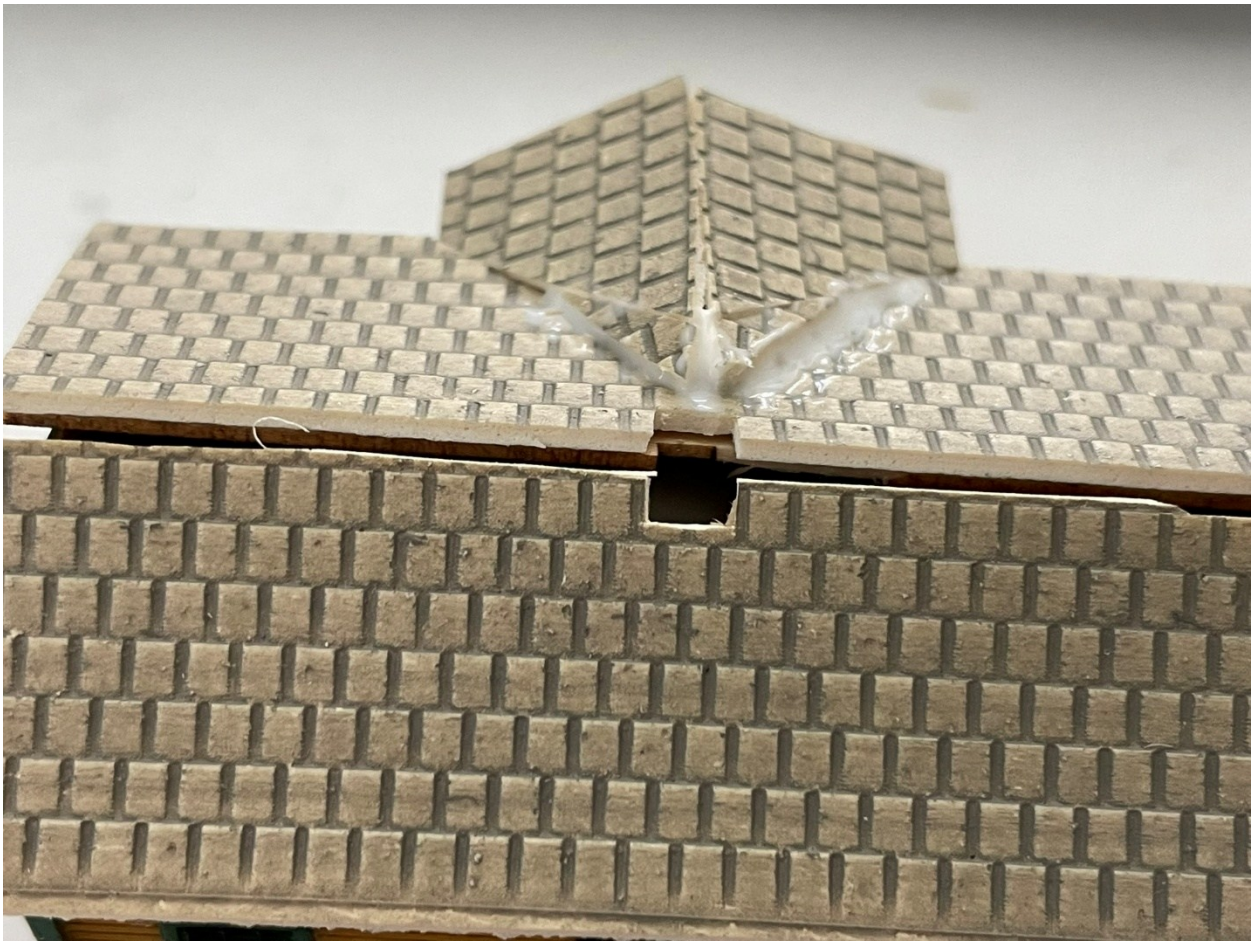
However, I did not think through in advance that the bay on the front of the building is not centered end-to-end and when I tested the fit, the notch for the front roof did not align to the structure. Turns out the roof panels should have been placed scribed-side up for this orientation of the building! So…cut two more pieces of roofing…

I cut notches for the chimney opening during the initial cutting of the pieces. The edges required multiple passes of trimming and beveling to make the roofing material align properly at the joints among the roof sections.

I did not use the Chooch adhesive sheet but rather glued the pieces directly to the wood with superglue.

The Chooch roofing material is quite thick for N-scale, so when applied, it accentuated the gaps between main and bay roof panels seen above. Therefore, I cut wedges of the material from one of the incorrectly sized pieces and glued them into the gaps as seen here. This will create a smooth enough joint to cover with paper flashing material.

N-Circle_26-02-01_AMB_Depot



I filled the large gap in the peak of the roof with a piece of square wood trim leftover from a previous kit, to provide support to the roofing over this peak. I then used strips of tarpaper leftover from previous kits to cover the gaps in the roof peaks and the joints with the bay section roofs. I lightly scored the center line of the strip with the sharp point of a hobby knife before folding, to get a clean fold. Note also the need to cut notches in the ends of the pieces which fill the bay joints, to align to the angles of the roofs.

Even though the roofing material is quite thick for N-scale, after painting the edges it looks okay. But I probably should have tried using this material for the first time on a simpler building…

I used the configurable parts holder again to align the chimney attachment as described for the two kits above. However, the hole in the roof was quite a bit larger than the chimney, so I pressed it against one side of the hole and the superglue held it initially. After it dried, I added more filler in the gap on one side, then more flashing to cover all the issues where the roof peaks come together at the chimney, and finally the metal flashing to cover some of those patches.

As with the three JLI yard structure kits, after everything was assembled, I added a 3-D printed gooseneck light over the door to the waiting room, as lights were not included in the kit.

This Depot kit required about 8 hours to complete over 28 sessions. This probably could have been less without the experimentation with alternative roofing material.

I applied a few splotches of watered-down mud-colored paint on the roofs of the three buildings for weathering – I may add weathering chalks later when it is warm enough to use spray clear coat over them in the garage.

I did not add signage to the buildings yet, it will be added later after their use is determined on either the N-Circle layout or NWV modules. I will probably describe their use on NWV modules in a future N-Circle Update. But here we see the three completed structures.

N-Circle_26-02-26_AMB_All_1_Cropped

N-Circle_26-02-26_AMB_All_2_Cropped

As a closing comment: using white glue to assemble these structures rather than the peel-and-stick does leave some visible residual glue around the joints. But a final touch-up application of the green trim paint generally hides these blemishes.

Like the JLI Bagwell Tower kit in N-Circle Update 30, I would not recommend the AMB Yard Office kit to an inexperienced N-scale modeler. But in general, these were quality made kits that provide a challenge to an experienced modeler, with opportunity for creativity to modify them for those who like to “work outside the lines.”