N-Circle Railroad Update 32 – March 22, 2026

Building a Laser-Cut Wood Kit for a Creamery

This report describes assembly of another laser-cut wood kit with peel-and-stick trim for use on an NWV Model Railroad Association T-Trak module, the Laser-Art Creamery kit 880. Here we see the packaging photo for reference.

N-Circle_26-01-20_Creamery

Coincidentally, this cover photo shows the kit finished with yellow walls and dark green trim, very similar to the rail yard structures just completed for Updates 30 and 31. But I did not intend this to be a railroad building, but rather a commercial creamery or other trackside business. So, I painted the walls Polly-Scale Reefer White and trim with Polly-Scale Azure Blue. This light blue seemed like a good choice for an old, weathered creamery building. I did not paint the loading docks and their supports, I just left them wood color.

I painted the walls and trim while still in the wood sprue plates, as always applying a water wash to the back sides first, to reduce warping of the wood. There was still some warping of the walls, so I put them under weights to dry. Note that with this light blue trim against the white walls it was more important to paint the outer edges of the window and door frames after

removing them from the sprues. I did not bother with the window sashes and doors, as their edges are embedded in the walls.

I left the large loading dock doors with their diagonal boards as unpainted wood, for an interesting contrast to the blue trim. I glued on the ice loading and freight doors and their trim first, as they were simple before tackling the multi-piece windows.

There are two window sashes for each window, the lower one can be in a raised or lowered position. 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 window frames in this kit are a bit thicker and more robust than the laser-cut wood kits recently completed, so I assembled all of them using the peel-and-stick. I am still not a big fan, as the parts will usually stick to your finger, your hobby knife or the work surface before they stick to their intended destination… I continued to use white glue to attach them into the wall openings and to attach the outer trim pieces to the walls. This should hold any separation of the peel-and-stick components over time. However, I will admit that an advantage of the peel-and-stick is that it eliminates the occasional glue that can run onto the sides of the clear glaze, which can be visible when viewed close-up, though not at a distance.

Many of the window sashes were a bit too large to fit into the wall openings. I did not test fit and trim the wall openings before inserting each window, so in some cases there was some distortion in the final placement. For many of the walls, I pressed them between my two sheets of glass after gluing the windows into the openings as seen here, to keep the windows and trim all in plane while they dried.

N-Circle_26-02-03_Creamery

Assembling the four main walls was reasonably easy, I only had to trim the height of one notch on one wall during the pre-assembly test-fitting. I used wood glue and four rectangular magnets on a metal baking pan to get everything square, as seen here.

N-Circle_26-02-06_Creamery_Cropped

However, the large tab on the side wall of the boiler room did not fit into the slot on the main end wall and required significant trimming with a sharp hobby knife. Test all the wall mating notches before beginning assembly!

I added an interior floor between the two main levels, cut from thin cardboard. As discussed for other buildings, while there will not be interior details on the floor, it provides a light block so that one does not see the first-floor windows looking in the second-floor windows or vice versa. Here we see the floor in place, with corner shims above and below in the corners to support the floor and reinforce the corner joints, using scraps cut from the sprues for the main walls, as they will not be visible when the building is complete.

N-Circle_26-02-09_Creamery_Cropped

The next step is to add the strips of plastic peel-and-stick stone foundation around the base of the building. The instructions say to attach them, then paint them, but I decided it would be much easier to paint them while still in the sheet and not have to worry about having paint over-runs onto the white walls. You can always do a little touch up on the corners later after it is in place if needed, like with the wood corner trim boards. Much easier.

The panels are a light brown color – at first, I applied a light grey paint, but that was too light and the brown showing through did not look right for a stone wall. So, I applied a coat of dark grey over everything, then after it was dry, a lighter grey wash for the mortar lines between the stones.

I went over the ends of the notches in the wood wall corners with white paint before attaching the foundation panels and trim boards, to make sure their dark ends would not show through at the edges. In retrospect, that was a good thing…

The peel-and stick foundation panels go on easily, as long as you align one end carefully before allowing any of the length to stick. Doing this for the front and end walls was clear, but for the rear wall you don't know where the loading shed will attach along this wall until later. They give you one long section of panel the length of the building, which you can cut as needed. While the instructions would have you do the rear wall at this point, I held off on applying these two sections until after the loading shed was in place later, to prevent a regrettable misstep at this point…

Adding the roof panels was next and was not as easy as expected. The slots in the ends of the main roof panels are not exactly centered front-to-back. The offset is slight and not obvious just looking at them. Fortunately, I tested the fit before reaching for the glue. If installed in the wrong orientation, they will interfere with each other at the peak of the roof. There is no indication of this in the instructions and the panels have no markings of how to orient them. The panels in my kit were slightly warped even with no painting, and the end walls were warped inwards slightly, so aligning the tabs on the walls to the slots in the roof panels required some gentle pressure without breaking the wall joints.

I then found that one corner of the first panel was sufficiently warped that it left a gap from the top of the wall. I had to do a quick application of a clamp to this not-square structure to hold it, carefully propped up so it would stay in place, as seen here.

N-Circle_26-02-27_Creamery_Cropped

Attaching the strips of black tarpaper roofing with white glue was straightforward and went well. I created a ridge cap by taking a strip of the roofing paper, scoring it lengthways down the center with a hobby knife, folding it to create a crease and gluing it in place.

For the loading shed discussed below I decided to add some interest to the structure and superglued on a piece of the corrugated metal roofing left over from earlier kits, rather than using more tar paper. The creamery folks had to replace this old roof at some point over the years and had some metal roofing around!

Assembling the loading docks is not rocket science, but it requires good eyes, a steady hand and patience. For the legs of the front loading dock, you want to glue the diagonal braces on one side of the legs and let them dry before doing the other side, or you will dislodge the first while aligning the second. I used wood glue and assembled them on a glass plate to avoid them being glued to the work surface by any glue overruns.

The instructions say to just insert the seven legs into the holes in the front wall without gluing them to align them for adding the front cross-bracing and deck. This would allow the dock to be removed and painted separately after assembly. But given that I was not planning to airbrush paint the assembly, just add some weathering to the natural wood floor, and I did not expect that trying to re-align all seven legs into the holes after the dock was built would add to my sense of "model railroading is fun…" I glued the legs into the holes at the beginning. With this glue still wet and the structure upright with the legs on a flat working surface, it was then easy to align the legs to the proper points of the cross-brace. I used magnets braced against the legs to hold them in place to dry. Once this structure was dry, I glued on the decking. This piece was slightly warped, but a set of magnets weighed it down enough to dry flat.

Assembling the end loading dock was simpler, I glued the cross braces to a pair of the legs and let them dry first, then completed the rest of the assembly in one session. These two loading decks were easier to assemble than the yard tower staircases of the kits in N-Circle Updates 30 and 31!

I did not paint the loading docks but did paint the dark laser-cut edges of the pieces with a lighter brown, though not matching the natural wood color of the faces of the legs and decking.

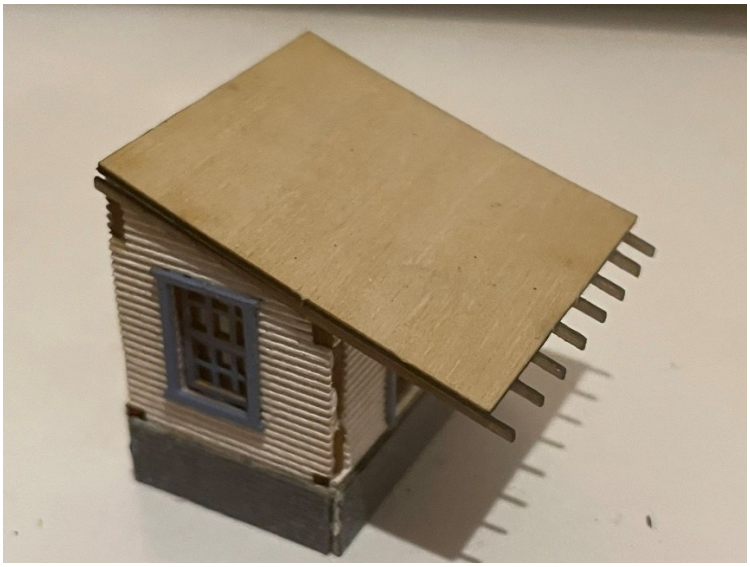
As with other wood kits, I painted the edges of the corner trim pieces after removing them from the sprue sheets – a tedious but necessary task to not have bare edges on these trim pieces, which would be very difficult to paint after the boards are on the building.

Many of the corner trim boards were a bit too long to fit in the height of the wall and had to be trimmed with a sharp knife. I attached them with white glue, again not using the peel-and-stick. This went reasonably well. Apply the narrow board first, then overlap it with the wider board at each corner.

The instructions with my kit showed a floor in the loading shed, but there was no floor in the kit and the walls did not have slots to hold the floor as shown in the instructions, so they changed the kit somewhere along. But the floor is not necessary, and I did not make one – viewers will just very dimly see the surface under the structure unless you install interior lighting or assemble the shed with the loading doors open.

The loading shed has a row of rafters to glue in place before attaching the roof. But the roof panel was not long enough to cover their length, as seen here.

N-Circle_26-02-28_Creamery



And yes, there was only one piece in the box that could be this panel, so it wasn't that I used the wrong one! I considered just trimming off the ends of the rafters with sprue cutters but decided to maintain the coverage of the width of the loading area, so I cut a narrow piece from the wood sprue plate that held the roof panel and glued it on the edge. The joint will not be visible after the roofing material is attached.

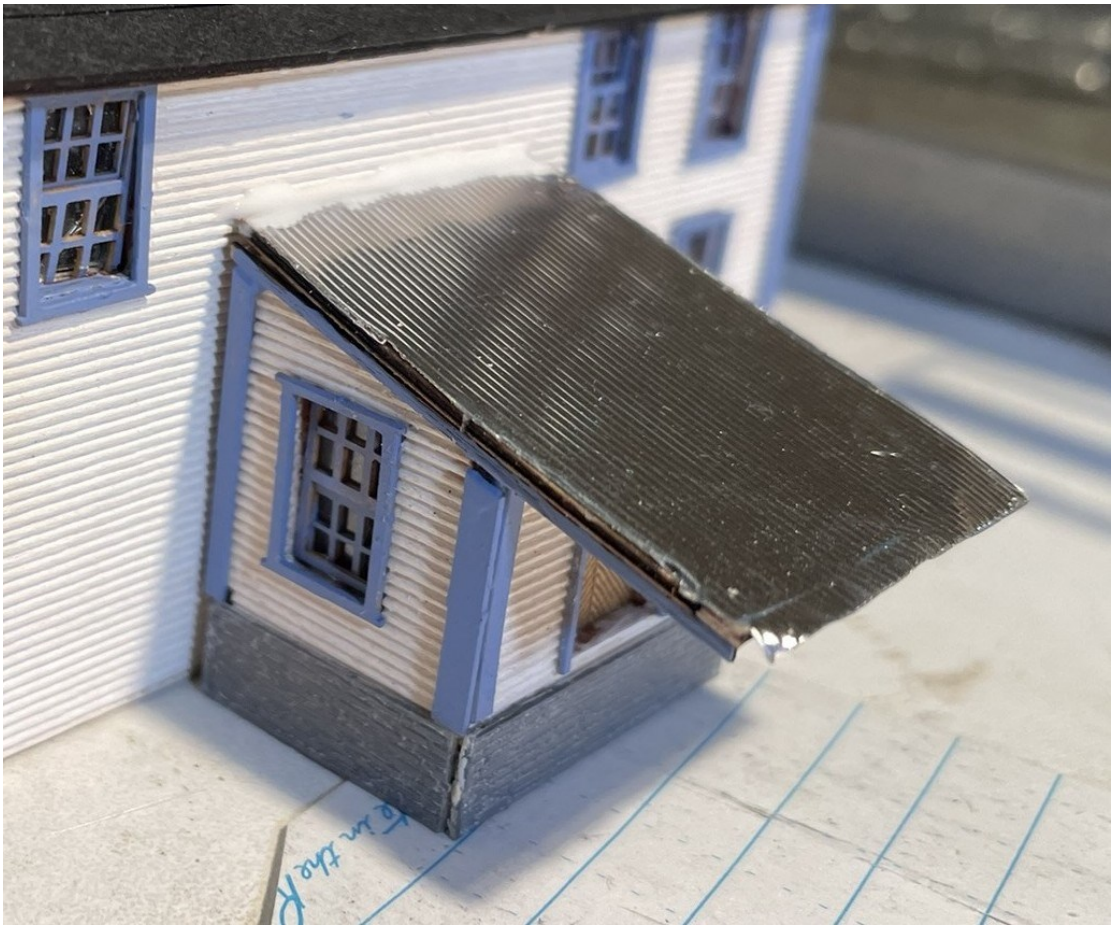
An N-scale truck cab height is about 15 mm, the clearance at the outer end of the rafters is 17 mm, so the clearance will be okay. The loading shed will be on the back of the building and thus not directly visible when it is placed on a module.

The loading shed does not have any alignment tabs to the rear of the main building, which allows it to be placed at a bit higher elevation if the creamery is built into a side hill. This is a nice feature but given this structure will most likely be used on a flat T-Trak module, I attached the shed at the same elevation as the main building using white glue. Two lessons from this step:

I should not have attached the corner trim boards to the back walls of the loading shed until after attaching the shed to the main building, to avoid having a gap between the trim board and the main wall.

I filled the gap between the top edge of the roof and the main building wall with white glue, to be painted black later to look like roofing tar. Both issues can be seen in this photo.

N-Circle_26-03-16_Creamery_Cropped



I used the final coat of blue trim paint to try to fill gaps between the corner and window trim boards. This worked reasonably well, but it is difficult for me to say that the end product looked better than a good quality plastic kit could produce with straight square joints without all the extra work.

The chimneys for this kit are easier to deal with than those for the AMB kits in N-Circle Update 31. You just superglue them to the roof surface – no having to align them in an open hole! However, you have to cut the chimneys at an angle to match the pitch of the roof. To do this, I laid the building on end and traced the angle of the roof on paper with a pencil, to use to guide the angle to cut the base of the chimneys. Cutting these tiny pieces at the correct angle is a challenge, depending on what tools you have available. I scribed the angle of the cut into the chimney surface with a hobby knife, then completed the cut with a micro saw. Despite being careful, they ended up being different lengths. But I remedied that by placing them at different distances down from the ridge pole, so their tops are at the same height. There is no reason to expect the two furnaces were in line inside the building! And the chimneys are on the rear from the building's primary viewing angle, so their exact alignment will not be as noticeable. Also test to make sure the base is cut off square – I didn't and had to do some last-second filing!

I did not add signage to the building; it will be added later when it is placed on an NWV module. We may use it as a creamery, or re-purpose it to a freight transfer building for use in a later time period. And I will add more scenery details on the loading docks after we determine the ultimate use. I will probably describe its placement on an NWV module in a future N-Circle Update.

Here we see the completed structure from the trackside loading dock side, which will be the viewing angle when placed on a T-Trak module.

N-Circle_26-03-21_Creamery_1

The truck loading dock is seen from this next angle, in front of the boiler room extending off the end. One side of the milk loading shed on the rear is also seen. The metal roof edge needs some realignment and weathering added to that shiny surface. The black tar along the top of the roof where it meets the main wall is a little sloppy where the creamery maintenance guy applied it one day after a heavy rainstorm!

N-Circle_26-03-21_Creamery_2

The other side of the milk loading shed is seen here, the metal roofing will need some adjustment on this side also, before final placement on a module.

N-Circle_26-03-21_Creamery_3

Finally, the two ice loading doors are partially visible on the end in this view.

N-Circle_26-03-21_Creamery_4

This kit required about 18 hours to complete over 44 sessions, compared to previous laser-cut wood kits. The number of sessions could have been reduced if I had installed more windows and doors per sitting – my patience with peel-and-stick windows usually only lasted through doing one wall.

While this kit required a lot of work to complete due to its size and complexity, especially the loading docks, it was easier to work with than the previous JLI and AMB kits, due to having more robust parts.

Laser-Cut Wood Kit Perspectives

After completing the laser-cut wood kits in Updates 23 through 27 and 29 through 32, I would say:

The downside of building laser-cut wood kits in N-scale is that working with these incredibly small pieces, you may end up with parts that are not as perfectly aligned as you would like.

The upside of building any kits in N-scale is that very few people will be able to see the imperfections once they are on your layout. While they are very visible in close-up photos like in these N-Circle Updates, they will be lost in the overall scenes of your layout, so don't stress over them. I really don't notice and think about the many imperfections in my structures once they are on the layout!

I have observed that the packaging and instructions for many N-Scale laser-cut wood kits show a photo of the completed kit with a caption "HO Scale Version of Kit Shown." I believe that most of these kits were originally designed and produced in HO-scale, then scaled to N-scale. While modern laser technology allows the pieces to be very precisely cut and scribed, the resulting very thin window frames and trim pieces at the smaller scale end up being very fragile to work with. I have not built HO scale wood kits, but I have to believe they are easier to work with.

I did a web Google search and determined there are about 17 companies still currently producing N-scale laser-cut wood structures kits, so they must be popular with many modelers.

I would recommend for new modelers, purchase and build one or two laser-cut wood kits before filling your storage racks with stacks of these kits to build "someday." While they are a fun challenge for many skilled model builders, they may be too much for many others.

So, while personally, I am not a fan of working with laser-cut wood, peel-and-stick kits, for the many reasons discussed in these N-Circle Updates, I respect that for the experienced modeler they provide the opportunity to modify the structure more readily than plastic kits and in the right hands can produce very nicely detailed structures for a layout.

In conclusion, I will confess that I still have nineteen laser-cut wood kits in inventory to build, but all but one are small structures for the park or are wood loading docks for freight transfer scenes, not of the complexity of the kits built to date. So, stay tuned!