

[N-Circle Railroad Update 10 – October 25, 2021](#)

This update continues the discussion of the development of structures for the N-Circle Railroad, again presenting three different plastic kits of very different vintage, techniques and quality, and their modelling opportunities and challenges. This update also describes easy, low-cost interiors.

Suburban Homes

This month, I took what I thought would be a quick diversion to assemble a set of three suburban homes from a kit the NWV purchased for me through Green Mountain Trains in 1995, to replace house kits I had donated for use on the NWV's original N-scale layout. The box says "Easy to build" as you can see.

[N-Circle_21-10-05_ModelPower_Houses_1](#)



What you don't expect, though it is accurately portrayed on the cover of the box, is their bizzarro colors of the plastic wall sections. The walls come on six different sprues of four different colors, but wall sections for the three houses are distributed across multiple sprues! One suspects the sprues were laid out by what pieces conveniently fit together on them, not by a logical construction of the buildings. Thus, if you don't paint the walls, the houses will come out in two or even three different colors, like the picture on the box!

So, step one is to figure out which wall sections go with each house – there are many sections, as the two-story house has multiple floor panels, and the other two have additions. I marked a number on the inside of the panels with a fine point Sharpie for each of the three houses, so I could keep track of them when painting. And because there is a significant difference in the colors of the plastic sections, from white to dark blue, two or even three coats of paint were required to obtain a consistent color across all sides of a house. So, perhaps not an “easy build” if you are looking for a more realistic appearance!

[N-Circle_21-10-05_ModelPower_Houses_2](#)



The windows and doors were all white, I chose not to repaint any of them, I just cemented the thin, clear glaze on their backs before cementing into the walls. The glaze in this kit was very thin and easy to work with, and attached to the frames well with styrene cement, which was nice. The kit also comes with a paper sheet printed with various patterns of curtains to install on the inside of the window glaze. I cut out a number of these and attached them with white Elmer's glue, they add some nice realism to the houses, as you will see in the final finished photos.

The kit came with bases for each house, extending out stone patios, sidewalks, etc., but I chose not to use them, as they raise the house up, which will make it more difficult to integrate into surrounding scenery later, and the detail on the bases was not great. But I did use the bases while assembling the walls, as the alignment tabs on the base helped keep the walls square, I just didn't apply cement between the walls and the base, so the house could be removed after

the wall joints dried. Assembling the walls is not easy, even using the base as a guide, to get all the four corners properly aligned at once. It may be easier if the walls are cemented to the base, providing another stabilizing point. I also added interior corner sprues pieces to all three houses to increase the strength of the joints for handling, as I have done with previous structures.

After my previous N-Circle Update, Kara Darling asked if I was going to add interiors to my buildings. I responded that with N-scale windows being so small and the N-Circle layout height being only 25 inches, no one would ever see any interiors. However, a couple of these houses have large picture windows, and I realized that if I just placed them without a base on my scenery panels, one would see green grass both outside and inside... So, I extended the cardboard inter-level floor technique discussed in previous N-Circle Updates to make a bottom floor with a sight-blocking inner wall, by cutting and folding two pieces of box board and taping them together. Not being ambitious enough to make detailed furniture and believing that few people would be able to tell a piece of furniture from a colored block through the window glazing, I created "furniture" from segments cut from various colored plastic sprues saved from previous projects. A couple of pieces of light blue sprue glued together look like a sofa, and a small piece of brown sprue looks like an end table... I even added a person looking out the picture window. Remember the guiding principle of N-Circle Railroad scenery: "Looks good from ten feet"!

The following two photos show the sprue pieces cemented into the corner joints, and the multi-colored sprue pieces "furniture" glued to the cardboard floor and center wall inserts, before installing the roofs. The base that comes with each building are shown behind them – again, I used these for alignment when gluing the main walls, then removed them.

N-Circle_21-10-10_ModelPower_Houses_2



N-Circle_21-10-10_ModelPower_Houses_3



And no, Kara, I am not adding interior lighting any time soon – no need to highlight my lazy interiors! But since the cardboard interiors are not attached to the structures, I can replace them someday with real furniture, wallpaper on the walls...and lights...someday!

The three houses took about fourteen hours over six days to build – most of the time was due to the extra painting and details added. If built in their original colors on the bases, they would have been close to the “Easy to build” promised on the box.

Unfortunately, the coat of Testor’s Dull Cote I apply to structures to protect the paint and decals fogged the windows more than I expected, obscuring the interior details. But we can still see the curtains in the windows and the woman looking out the picture window of the blue house in these photos of the finished homes.

[N-Circle_21-10-24_ModelPower_Houses_2](#)



N-Circle_21-10-24_ModelPower_Houses_3



We added a few Bachmann oak and pine trees among the houses on the new scenery underlay panel. These trees have bases which reduce their realism, but allow them to be easily attached with a small piece of double-stick tape for these preliminary evolving scenes. In the following overview of the West end of the layout, we see the three homes placed beyond the farmhouse scene described in the previous N-Circle update of October 2, 2021. In true Vermont fashion, it looks like they sold the South-40 of the farm for building lots!

N-Circle_21-10-24_North_West_View



Dew Drop Inn

I always wanted a “Dew Drop Inn” on my layout, to model a corny joke I have used for years. Fortunately, one is available in this classic Design Preservations Models kit, now sold by Woodland Scenics. Interestingly enough, though the kit is named, there are no signs included in the kit! Most people who build model railroad structures have built a DPM kit, so even though this was my first, I will not discuss it’s construction at length. I was surprised by how thick the plastic walls are compared to other N-scale kits, but the kit had good instructions, and was easy to assemble.



**WOODLAND
SCENICS®**

**N SCALE
STRUCTURE KIT**



Kit Contents

4 Walls, 1 Door, 1 Side Panel Material, 1 sheet Roof Material, 1 Roof Support Material, 4 Chimney Backs, 3 sheets Clear Window Material, Instructions

VEHICLES, FIGURES AND DECALS
NOT INCLUDED

**KIT #2
DEW DROP
INN BAR**

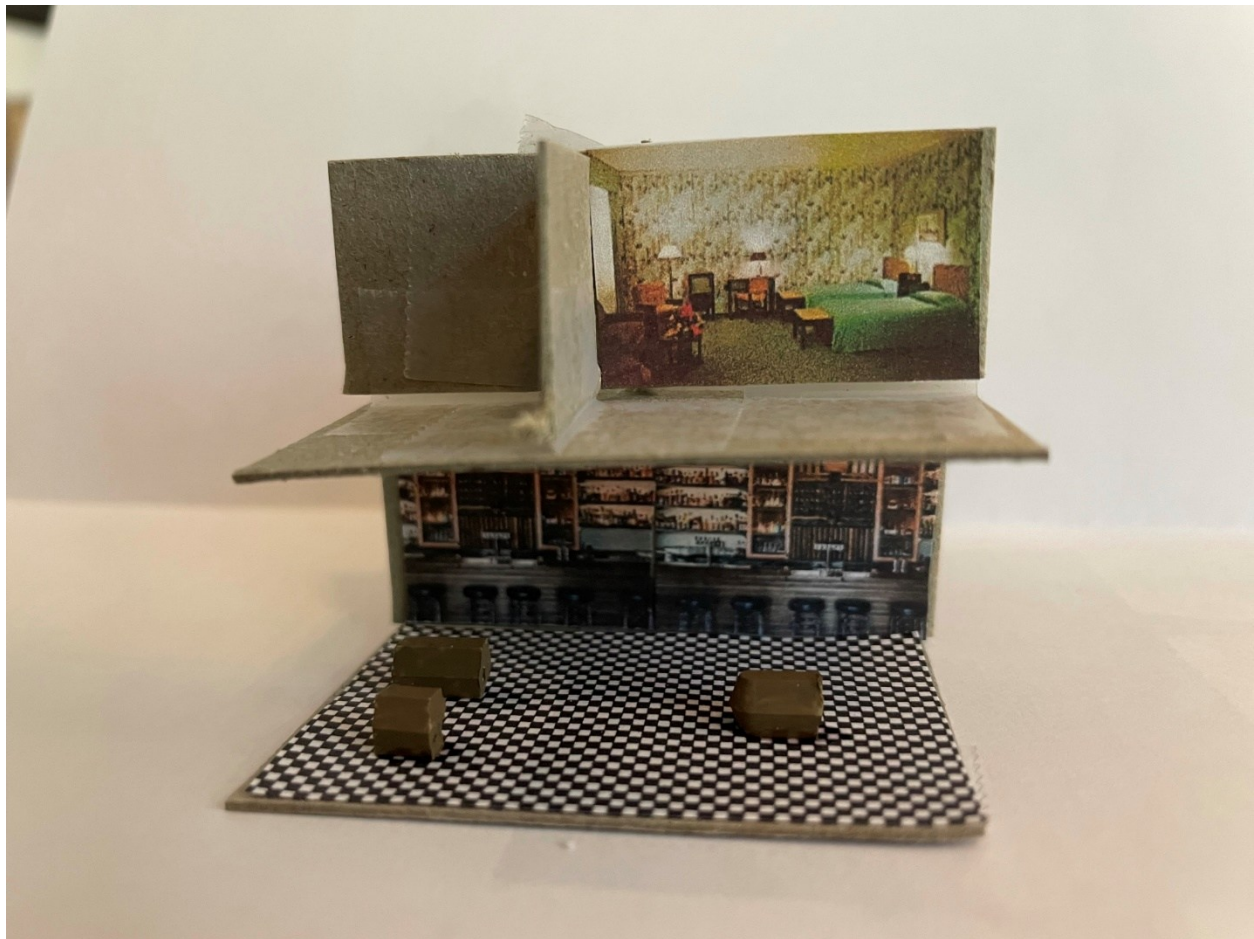
2 $\frac{7}{16}$ in W x 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ in D x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ in H
(6.19 cm x 8.25 cm x 5.71 cm)

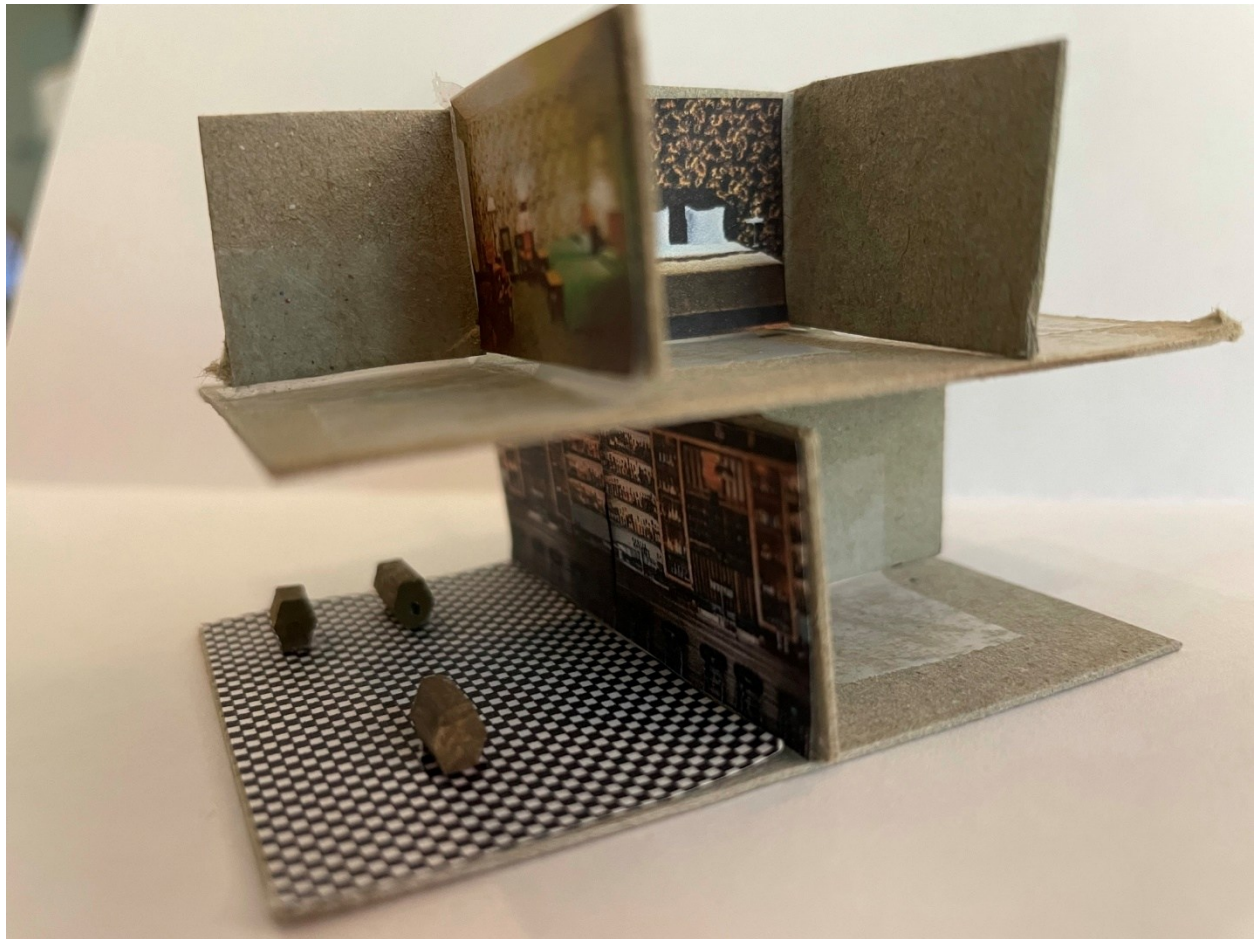
PO Box 98, Linn Creek, MO 65052
woodlandscenics.com

With Kara's prodding still in the back of my mind, I took the interior to the "next level." I used the temporary interior structure techniques described for the suburban houses above, this time building it two-levels high, rather than gluing a permanent cardboard floor between the first and second levels, like I did with structures described in previous N-Circle updates. These interior walls will provide light blocks, but I can easily replace them with more detailed versions in the future, as the bottom of the structure is open and they are not attached.

To create an interior for a few of the windows which may be visible in the final model, I captured photos of bars and hotel rooms from Google searches on the web, searching "Bar Room Interior", "Hotel Room Interior" etc. I imbedded the pictures into a Power Point slide at various sizes close to what I estimated for N-scale, then printed the sheet and cut out the ones closest to the size appropriate for the building. These are easy, inexpensive interiors, not confined to the limited and expensive options sold for N-scale. I created the black & white tile floor just using a Power Point fill pattern. The three "bar tables" are sections of sprue painted brown. Here we see the completed interior before inserting it into the building.

[N-Circle_21-10-24_WoodlandScenics_DewDropInn-1](#)





I used boxcar red paint on the exterior brick walls, then added a couple of drops of dark grey paint to white and added water to create a light grey wash for the mortar, leaving some on the brick surfaces, to make it look like someone painted the Inn a long... time ago. I used a similar light grey mix but not watered down on the trim and window and door frames. The light grey color with brush strokes in thick acrylic paint gives a weathered look as well.

The kit includes nice thin window glaze, and I added curtains leftover from the suburban houses kit on some of the windows. The Dew Drop Inn plastic sign is from Blair Line - beware that you need to be very careful not to get styrene cement on the front of these plastic signs – fortunately there were two Dew Drop Inn signs in the set, as I accidentally removed all the paint off the first one! The various beer signs are from Dave's Decals.

As with the Suburban Houses above done at the same time, the final coat of Testor's Dull Cote to protect the paint and decals fogged the windows more than I expected, obscuring all of the interior details. I thought about replacing the front windows for the first-floor bar section with new glaze, as they are still accessible through the bottom of the building. But I do not have another set of beer decals for the windows, so I decided not to at this point. From the lesson above with the Dew Drop Inn sign, I thought about using styrene cement to remove the fog, but figured I would probably damage the paint on the surrounding frame. So I used a wood

toothpick to scrap off most of the fog on the bar front windows, which improved things. I didn't attempt this on the second story windows and the windows of the three houses, for fear of punching the glaze out of the frames, so the other interiors are still obscured. In the future I will try masking the windows with tape or water-soluble glue before clear coating a building. But I would welcome ideas from others as well! The third photo below shows the building after scraping the windows, and now the interior floor is visible, so some success!

Anyway, in these photos of the finished structure, it is clear the Dew Drop Inn owner's brother-in-law is the local Blatz Beer distributor! I focused on Blatz because I already owned the truck and I remember the brand from Amtrak trips through Milwaukee on the Empire Builder. But I did have to include an Iron City Beer sign for a college friend from Pittsburgh! A couple of Classic Metal Works hot rods from the period complete the scene.

[N-Circle_21-10-24_WoodlandScenics_DewDropInn-3](#)



N-Circle_21-10-24_WoodlandScenics_DewDropInn-4



N-Circle_21-10-25_WoodlandScenics_DewDropInn-5



The kit took about seven hours over three days to paint and assemble, not counting adding the interior and signs.

Mini Golf Course

The Merten mini-golf kit is a simple kit, it just contains nineteen partially detailed golf course holes, tee markers, benches, a ticket shack and players, as shown in the following photo.

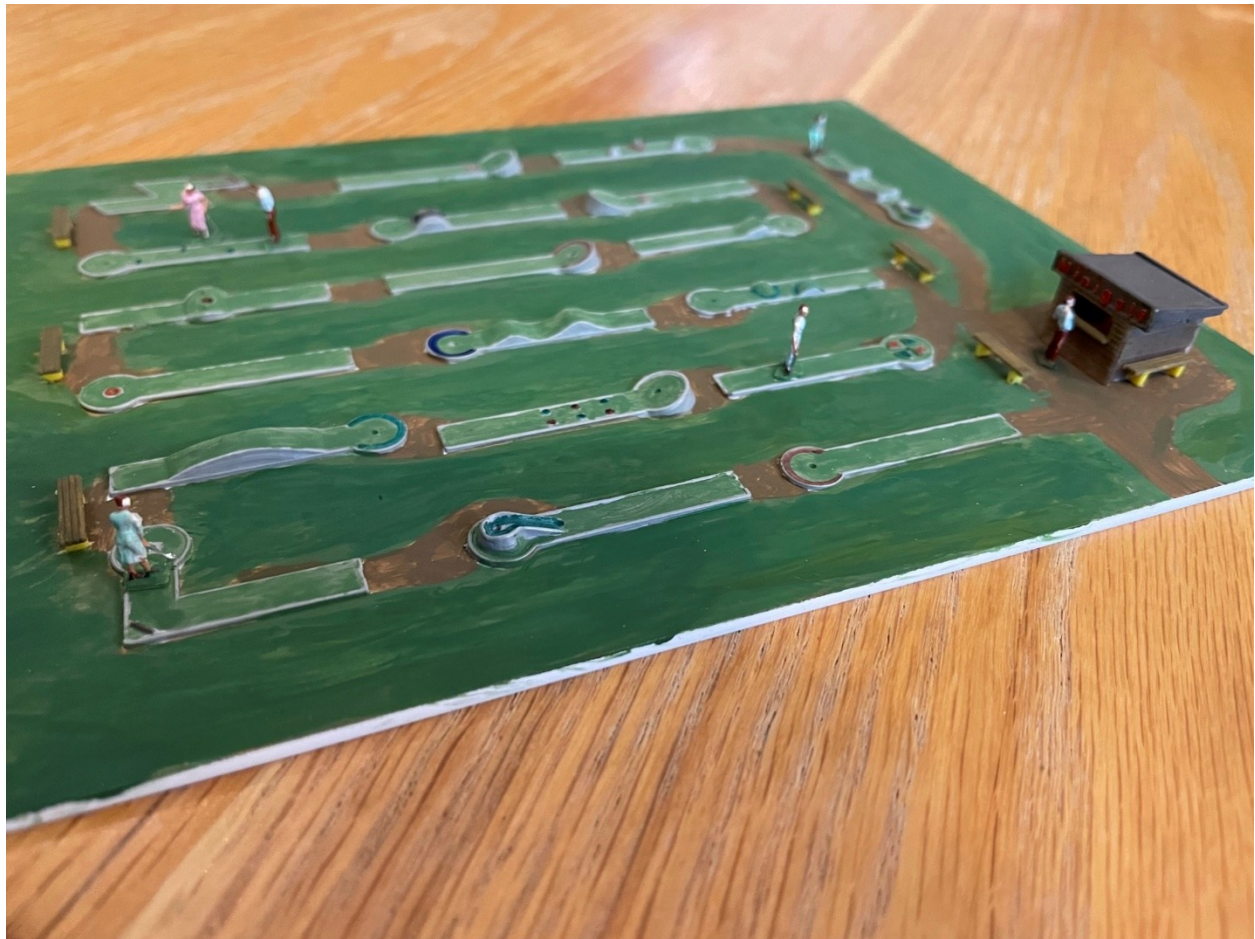
[N-Circle_21-08-28_Merten_MiniGolf-1](#)



We painted the putting greens grass green, then arranged and cemented them to a sheet of styrene. We used a dirt brown paint for the pathways between the holes, and a dark earth brown underlay for the grassy areas, overlaid with washes of three different shades of green, to create variation in the terrain. We placed the benches around the course but did not use the fragile hole markers. The following two photos show the currently “finished” course from opposite corners – eventually we will apply a grass layer and add shrubs and trees before integrating the course into a planned park scene on the East end of the layout. And we need to paint a few seated figures for the benches.

N-Circle_21-10-24_Merten_MiniGolf-1





These recent N-Circle updates have shown that older N-scale plastic kits which are of lower quality than newer plastic molded or wood laser cut kits, but which can still be found on eBay for a few dollars, can still be built into reasonable quality structures with some effort and creativity.

Finally, if you haven't already, I would recommend purchasing a pair of Xuron sprue cutters if you are going to be building many plastic kits. They are much easier and cleaner than using a knife for cutting parts off a sprue, and though they may still leave a small residual nub on the edge of the part, it can be easily removed with a file. I have used mine a lot these past couple of months!