

[N-Circle Railroad Update 22 – June 3, 2025](#)

This N-Circle Update will focus on filling in a small scenery area in front of the grain mill and adding new backdrops on the ends of the layout.

Designing a Power Point Scenery Panel for the Northeast Corner

Having filled in the open space between the tracks on the northwest corner module with the Yard Tower scene in Update 21, I decided to make a similar upgrade for the northeast corner. Here we see the “Before” scene, with bare brown plywood between the tracks, and a temporary panel under the edge of the unloading shed.

[N-Circle_25-05-01_Grain_Mill_Before](#)



Here I just added a simple scenery panel extending the gravel area around the Wayne Feeds car loading shed to form an employee's parking lot between the tracks. The dimensions of this panel are identical to the Yard Tower panel, as the two ends of the yard are mirror-images.

To align the edges of the gravel areas to the loading shed and leave a grass strip separation from the tracks, I used a vernier overlay to align areas on the Power Point slide to the dimensions of the scene.

The grid is a Grouped object of lines at 10 mm spacings, stored in a slide in the slide set. When designing a new slide, it is copied into that slide. Objects are sized and aligned according to the grid, then when done, the whole grid can be removed by deleting that one object. The panel design with the grid in place is shown here.

[N-Circle_25-05-02_Grain_Mill_SceneryUnderlay](#)



After the scenery panel was attached to the foam board, I decided we needed bumper stops along the track side of the parking lot, to prevent anyone from backing onto the main line as the 5:15 is leaving the nearby station! The stops were cut from leftover trapezoid-shaped grey styrene sprues. They are a bit over-sized, more like a Jersey Barrier, but they work. I had to

repaint them with Vallejo Grey Surface Primer as the ends were white after cutting them to length, and the original styrene color was a bit too dark. I placed them on a strip of double-stick tape to hold steady while painting.

I also added a crossing between the rails for vehicles to cross the tracks into this back lot. I used a thin piece of white styrene cut to size, then scored it with a hobby knife to simulate individual boards. A coat of water-thinned railroad tie brown paint provided the needed color. The piece is held in place with double-stick tape between the rails for now. Thus, a simple, convincing track crossing at no cost. Here we see all these pieces held in place for painting.

[N-Circle_25-05-03_Grain_Mill_DetailParts_Cropped](#)



The bumper stops are attached to the ground underlay with simple white glue. Thus, they could be removed and re-used on a final permanent scenery panel for this area someday. I also added some low shrubs among the bumpers, and another signal stand like the one placed near the yard tower in Update 21

To complete the scene, I moved to the front the three-axle Wayne Feeds truck kit-bashed in Update 12 and added a couple more vehicles to the lot, including one of the trailers from Update 18.

[N-Circle_25-05-07_Grain_Mill_After](#)



So, another brown patch is covered with first-pass scenery on the N-Circle layout...!

Installation of New Backdrops on Endcaps

The next project was to install new backdrops on the West and East endcaps, to replace the hand-made sectional ones described in Update 5.

I purchased three 12 x 80-inch backdrops printed on paper from Train Junkies, the first two for the endcaps, and the third an oil refinery scene for use someday on a Shell Oil refinery T-Trak module. I cut the prints to length to install them on the 40-inch-wide support panels that were already in place on the ends of the layout and attached them with double-sided Scotch tape.

Here we see the first Train Junkies: "Just Trees I" backdrop installed on the west end.

[N-Circle_25-05-23_Backdrop_West_2](#)



Unfortunately, once in place, I decided this line of trees is too tall – it looms over the much smaller scenery and trees on the layout. The trees are about 90 scale feet tall. Though the backdrop is listed as being for N-scale, I learned that one has to be careful when buying backdrops – if it is 12 inches high, and the trees are 3/4 the height of the picture, then yes, they are going to be over 90 scale feet tall. However, web research says a Vermont sugar maple tree typically grows to 60-75 feet height, though another source said very old maples can reach 90-120 feet. So perhaps the trees in my adjacent farm scene are not tall enough, nonetheless, the backdrop trees also look too tall relative to the structures and trains.

So, while this backdrop looks better than the previous one from taped-together multi-sectional prints, I purchased a replacement from Railroad Backdrops, seen installed here.

[N-Circle_25-06-03_Backdrop_West_1](#)



The foreground trees now look much more to scale with the scenery on the layout, as they appear to be some distance from the tracks, receding into the background hills.

Next, note the east-end back drop panel in the first photo above – it is a nice view of picturesque mountains and served its purpose for a few years, but it looks like the railroad is running high in the mountains – obviously inconsistent with the rest of the layout.

Therefore, I replaced it with the second backdrop from Train Junkies: “Pine Forest III.”

[N-Circle_25-05-23_Backdrop_East_1](#)



These trees are more to the scale of the layout, so this should be a good backdrop for the eventual park scene that will occupy this east end of the layout. I extended the backdrop past the south edge of the layout, to create a better scene in this southeast corner when viewed from the north side, the primary viewing angle.

These backdrops do not contain any human structures to “date” them, so they are appropriate for all four operating scenarios of the N-Circle Railroad. The small rolling hills on the west end may not be seen in much of Louisiana but could work for many areas where the Southern Pacific Railroad ran.