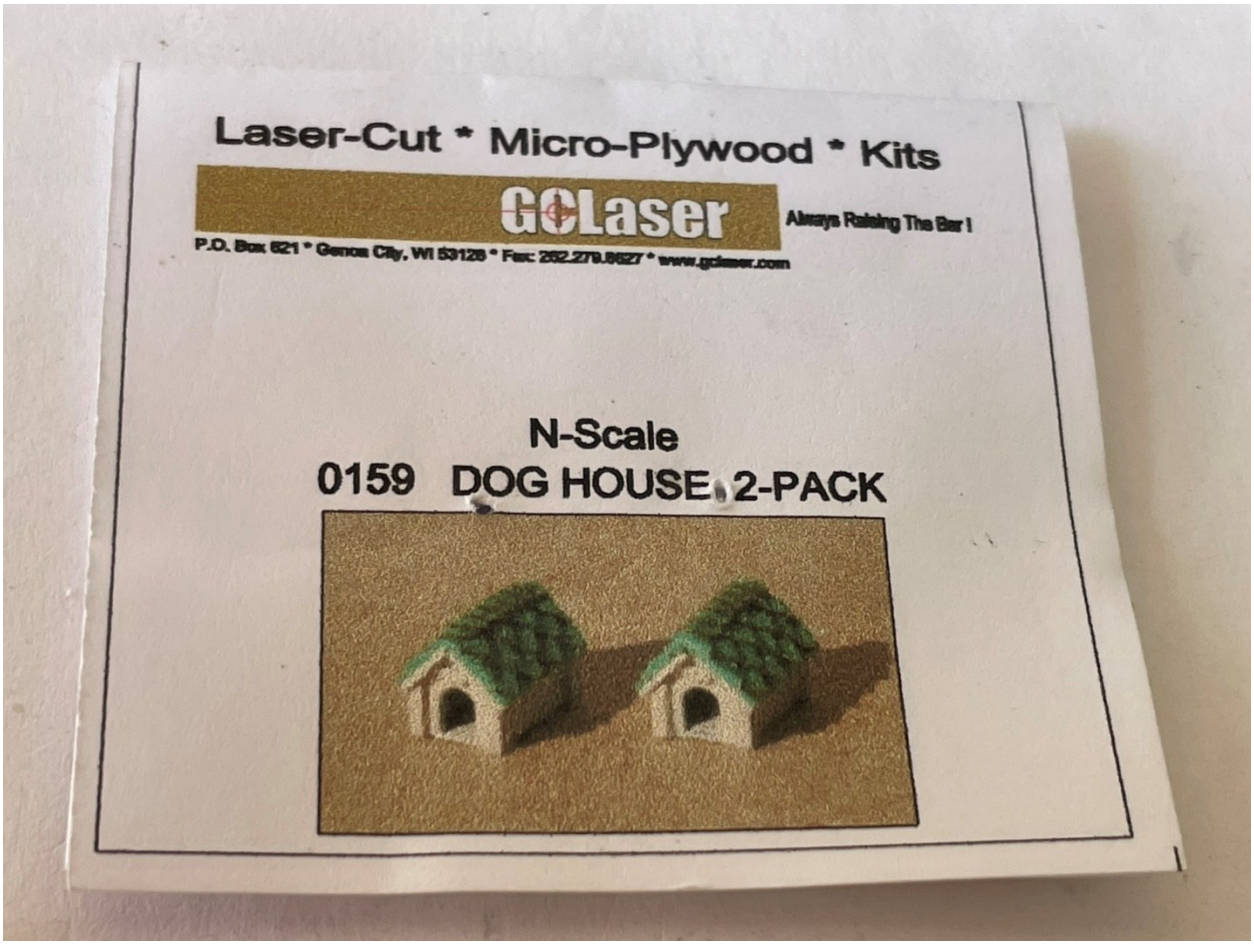
N-Circle Railroad Update 27 – August 16, 2025

Building a Laser-Cut Wood Doghouse Kit

The laser-cut wood doghouse kits from GC Laser redefine “tiny,” and that is coming from an experienced N-scale modeler! They are 5 mm wide by 8 mm long!

N-Circle_25-08-01_Doghouses_2

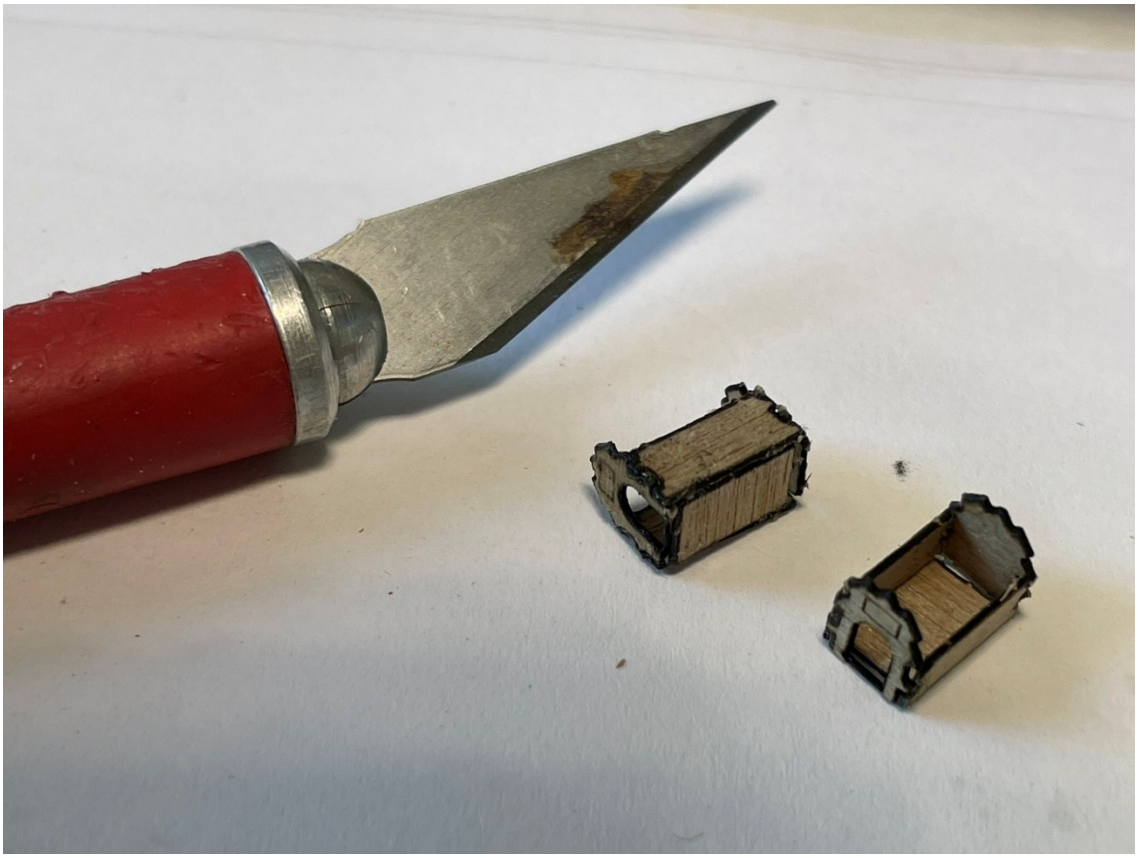


The instructions with the kit are clear enough for the few parts involved. There are no written descriptions, just a numbered diagram of the parts which corresponds to the order in which to assemble them. There are no windows or doors to attach to the walls like in the larger laser-cut wood buildings described in earlier N-Circle Updates, so I followed the instructions assembly sequence as they provided.

Therefore, there is no guidance on how to align the four walls initially. I used wood glue and found that if I laid the “large” side wall on the bench and pressed the two end walls up against it, that seemed to work. Then place the other side wall on top to align to the end walls and glue the bottom to the assembled four walls. But the pieces are so small and so light weight that they mostly want to adhere to your fingers or tweezers, not your desired destination. It took about 45 minutes to assemble the base four walls of the two houses. I strongly considered giving up but hung in there to be able to say I did it and to write this article!

For you non-N-scalers reading this – yes, that is a standard Exacto hobby knife blade in this photo – no trick photography was used to make these doghouses look smaller!

N-Circle_25-08-01_Doghouses_1



I allowed the four walls joints to dry before attaching the roof panels, otherwise I am sure they would have fallen apart again more than once… Given the four walls were not perfectly aligned, I expected the slots in the roof panels to not fully align to the tabs on the end walls, but I was able to flex them together.

After assembly, I painted all the exterior surfaces with Vallejo grey acrylic primer. The structure is so small that warping is not a concern!

The last assembly task is to add trim boards on the four corners…these are way smaller than those on the country barn or theater discussed in earlier N-Circle Updates! But they are not peel-and-stick, I think it would be impossible to make peel-and-stick pieces this small. I applied a drop of white glue on the building corners, then a tiny drop of glue on the end of a sharp wood toothpick to pick up the piece and guide it into place. This technique works okay, except the challenge is to get the piece to stay aligned on the wall and not pull away with the toothpick…

I dropped one trim piece on the floor, never to be seen again, but was able to cut a replacement from the frame wood which holds the pieces initially.

I painted both doghouses basic white. I did not paint the corner trim boards a contrasting color like with other larger structures – I doubt most dog owners would be that ambitious on the real thing either.

The kit also comes with a tiny plate to attach over the door – I assume it is intended to be a name plate. If anyone has a means to legibly print Fido's name on this plate, please let me know! Having gone to the trouble of attaching it, I put a couple of drops of grey paint on to highlight it and called it a day!

The kit came with some over-sized green shingles that one could apply, as seen in the packaging photo above, but I chose to use three strips of black tarpaper leftover from another kit – this looked more like a typical doghouse to me.

The door is only 3 mm high. I have a few dogs in my collection of figures, but none small enough to fit in this opening. Therefore, I chose one dog from a Woodland Scenics animals set to use in front of one house. I glued a thin piece of leftover wood from the frame of a previous wood kit (again, never throw anything away!) to mount him on, as seen in the photo on the left, then attached him with a spot of white glue, as seen on the right. He's going to have to scrunch down to get inside at night!

N-Circle_25-08-04_Doghouses_1_Cropped
N-Circle_25-08-04_Doghouses_2_Cropped

After viewing these photos, I realized that I should have cut the dog support plate to the dimensions of the house, as now there was a gap on the sides. So, I cut some shims from the same scrap wood and glued them in to fill in the gaps. The house with the dog is now raised up a bit, but some grass around the base will disguise that.

The final complete houses are seen here. Like the chicken in N-Circle Update 23, it is unlikely anyone will see the dog this up-close again!

N-Circle_25-08-05_Doghouses_Cropped

This kit only took about 3 hours to complete over 8 sessions for both houses. This includes the time to mount the dog!

In conclusion, this GC Laser kit is well made, the parts are cut accurately to fit together correctly. But if you really need an N-scale doghouse, I recommend finding a 3-D printed plastic model, buy it and paint it. No one among your family or friends will be able to see the difference on your layout between it and this craftsman wood kit. Actually, the plastic one will probably look better, as all the walls will be straight, which you may not achieve with this kit.

Building a Laser-Cut Wood RS Laser Garage Kit

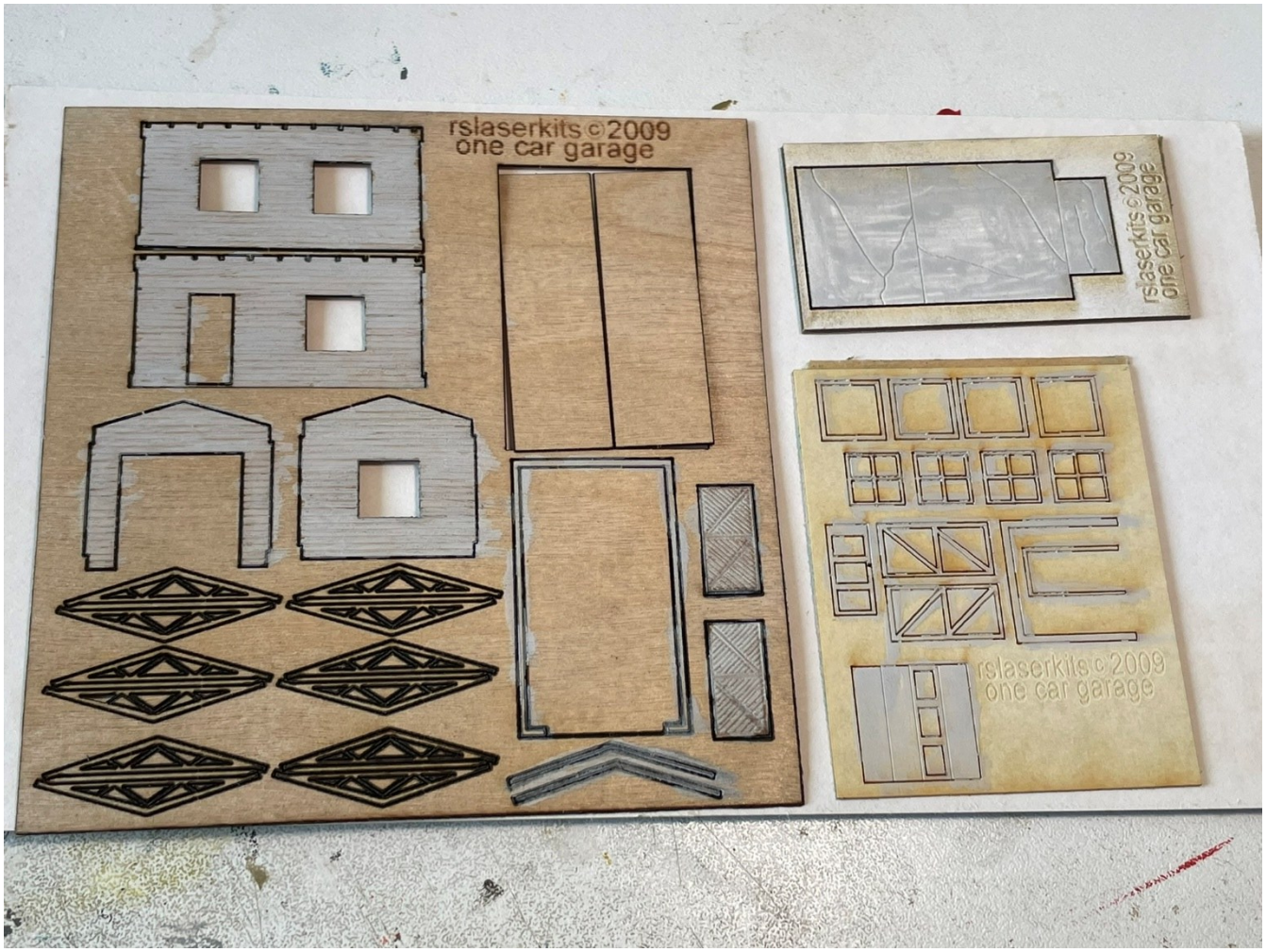
While on a roll building laser-cut wood kits, I decided to build and compare three garage kits from different manufacturers, to get them out of the “kits” box and onto the layout

The first up was this one-car garage kit from RS Laser.

N-Circle_25-08-01_Garage-RSLaser_1

The instructions recommend to assemble and attach the windows and doors before assembling the main walls, as I have done with previous wood kits. Here we see the parts sheets with the initial coat of Vallejo grey primer paint.

N-Circle_25-08-02_Garage-RSLaser_1



The window and door peel-and-stick trim pieces are very thin and fragile – I broke two when removing them from the plate, but was able to reconstruct them, like the window on the previous Old South Church in Update 26!

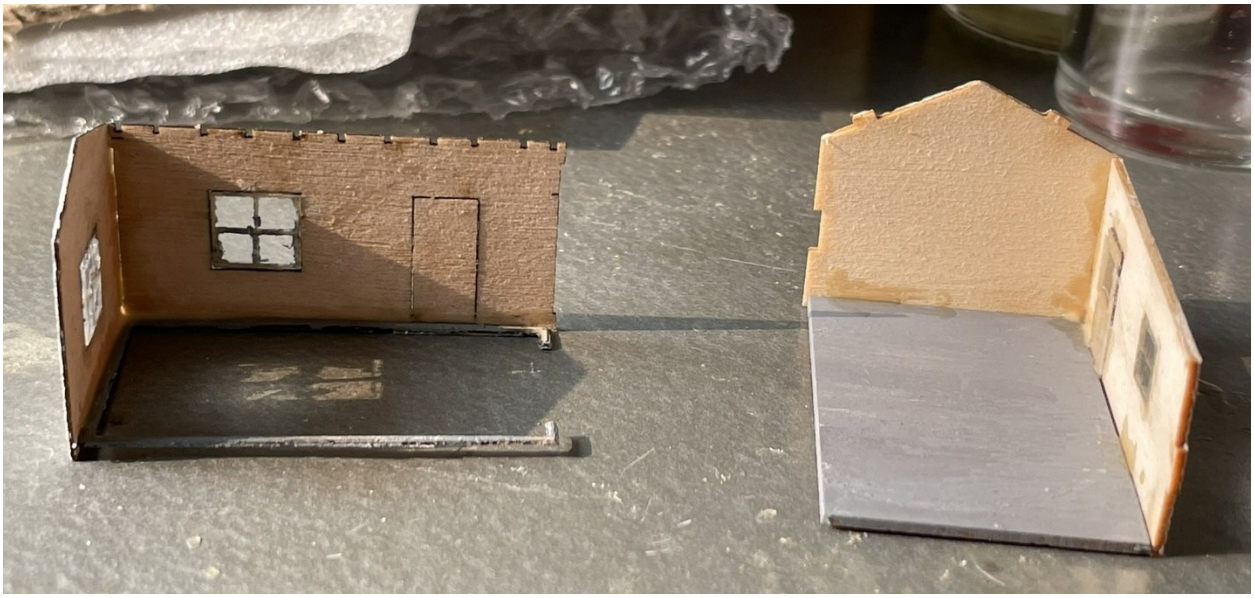
The kit comes with a choice of garage door styles. I used the modern, roll-up door. The internet says that the first overhead, roll-up garage door was invented in 1921, so they are good for use in 1950s scenarios on the N-Circle Railroad!

I started by painting the pieces before removing them from the sheets. The wood walls in this kit are reasonably thick, and by brushing water on the back sides, the Vallejo acrylic primer on the exterior surfaces did not cause them to warp. I just use water on the inside surfaces that will not be visible after assembly, because the wood is just sensitive to water, it doesn't care if it contains pigment, so why waste paint.

Attaching the peel-and-stick window and door frames was pretty much the same process as for previous laser-cut wood kits, so I won't include details here. I reinforced them with white glue from the inside wherever possible, and a few drops in the exterior corners, to insure their longevity.

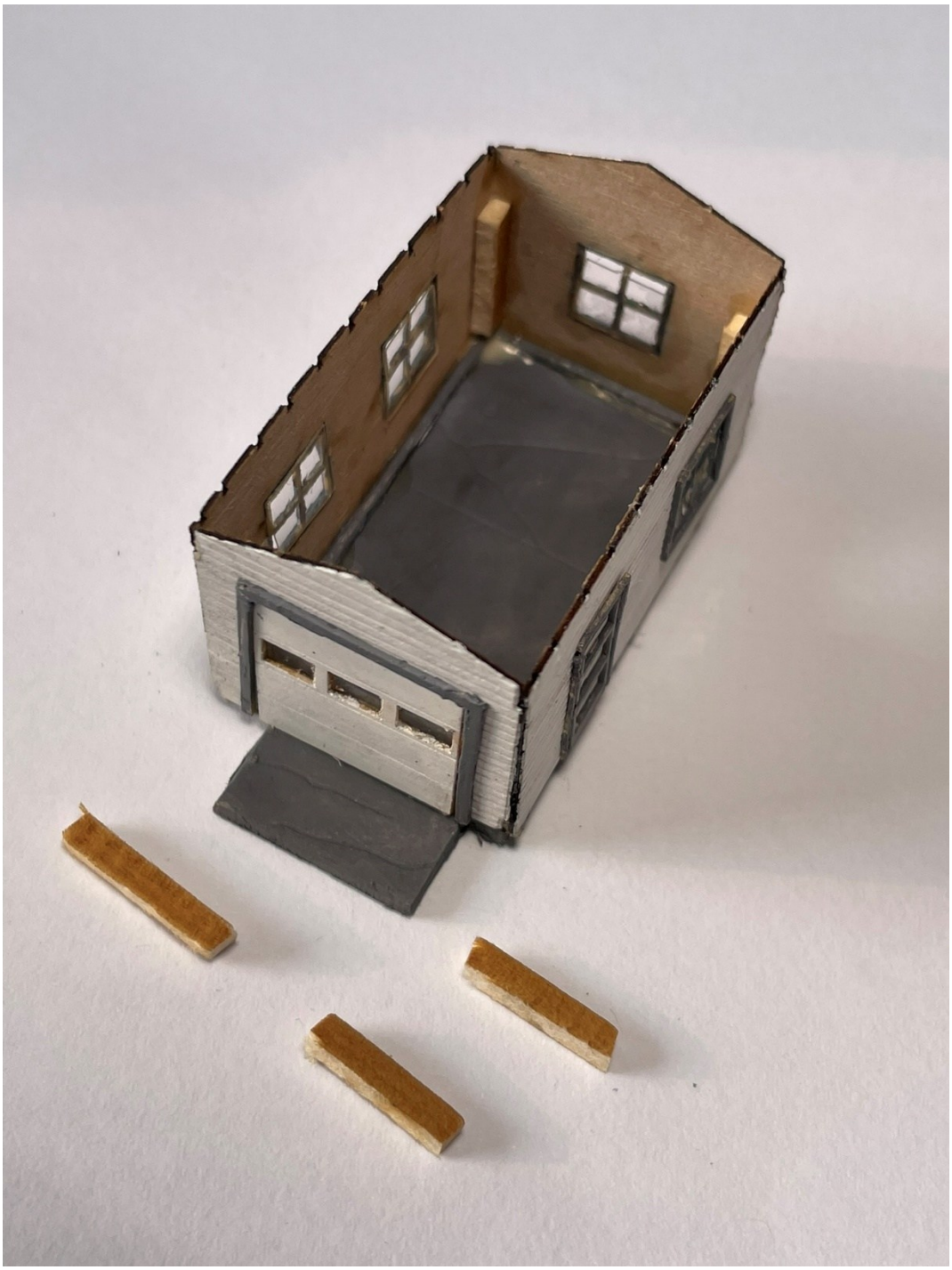
After all the details were in place and dry, I assembled the walls per the instructions, doing one corner first as seen here on the left, then the other. This assembly went fairly easily.

N-Circle_25-08-05_Garages



The kit came with a piece of very fine wood to reinforce the inside corners. But they will not be visible after the kit is complete, so I opted for more robust 2 x 2 mm pieces cut from leftovers from a previous kit and glued into the corners with a liberal application of wood glue. This also has the advantage of filling any light gaps where the walls may not be perfectly aligned.

N-Circle_25-08-05_Garage-RSLaser_1



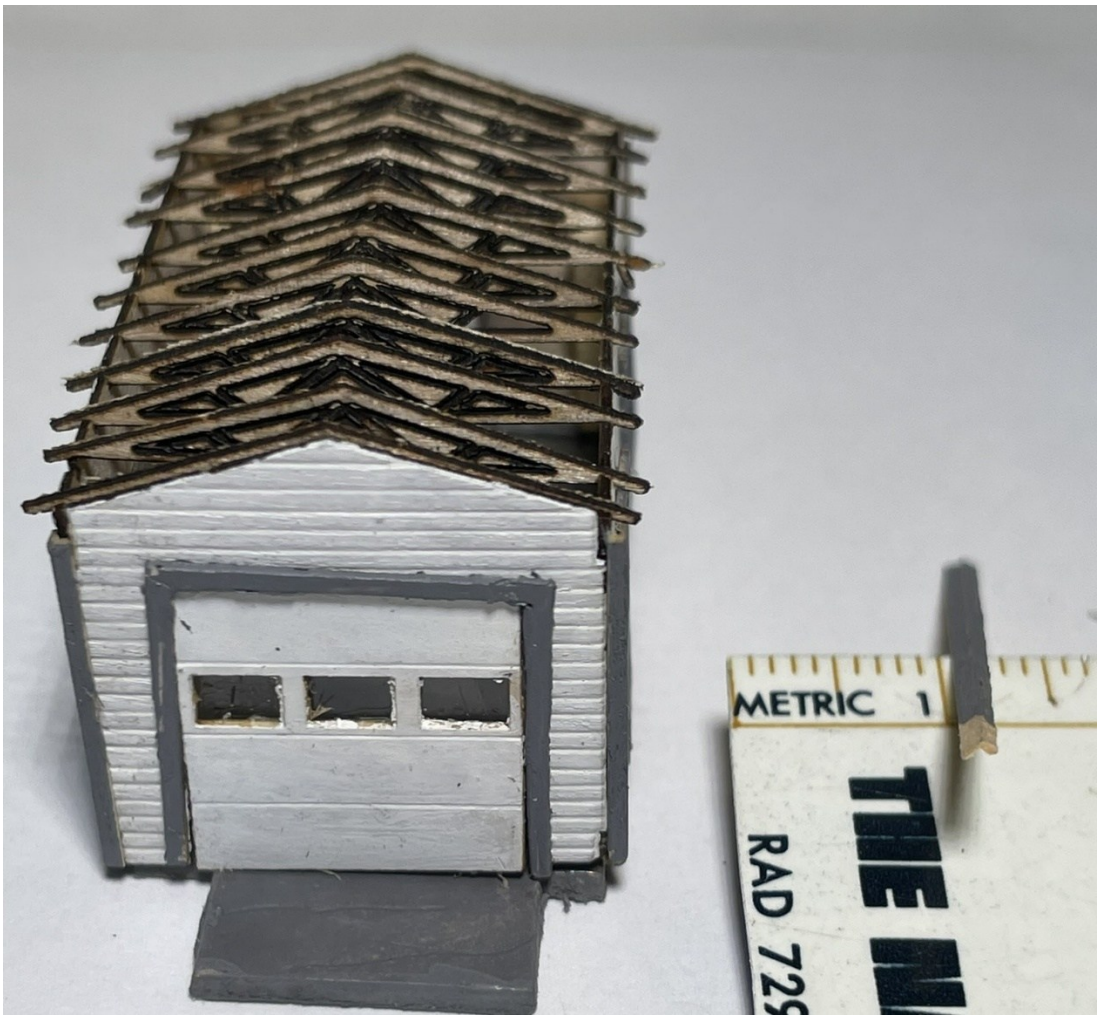
Like the Country Barn kit in Update 24, I don't understand the point of including interior rafters that are not visible once the kit is completed. They are not necessary to support these very small roof panels (and the roof will never have to support a large snow load on the N-Circle layout!)

I did not have the patience to carefully cut out all the tiny interior pieces of the rafters and risk breaking them, but I did cut the outer outlines from the sheet and glue them to the structure – if for no other reason than to be able to write about it for this report. They fit well into the notches in the sidewalls, so installing the twelve rafters was not too arduous a task.

A tiny 2 mm L-shaped wood strip is provided to create the corner trim for the walls – I have no idea how they manufacture this piece! I painted it first, then cut it to lengths and glued the pieces to the four corners with white glue. This was much easier and, in my opinion, looks better than the two peel-and-stick corner boards provided in other kits. It is very difficult not to end up with gaps between the two boards in that approach. If you can find wood like this, I would recommend using this on kits in place of the butted peel-and-stick trim corner boards!

Here we see the rafters before they disappear forever under the roof panels… You can also see the tiny trim piece on the right for reference.

N-Circle_25-08-09_Garage-RSLaser_Cropped



The black paper shingles provided were easy to attach to the roof panels with white glue. I probably did not space the rows as tight as they should be, but it is not greatly noticeable.

Glueing the roof panels to the walls was straightforward. There were no tabs, so it was easy to align the two sides with the wet wood glue.

In these two photos of the completed garage zoomed in close, it looks a bit rough. On the layout, its cosmetic deficiencies hopefully will be less noticeable…

Note that the ends of the roof rafters are visible – more pronounced on one side than the other.

N-Circle_25-08-12_Garage-RSLaser_1_Cropped

N-Circle_25-08-12_Garage-RSLaser_2_Cropped

This kit took about 4.5 hours to complete over 10 sessions, so a fairly simple kit build. The number of sessions probably could have been reduced with some pre-planning.

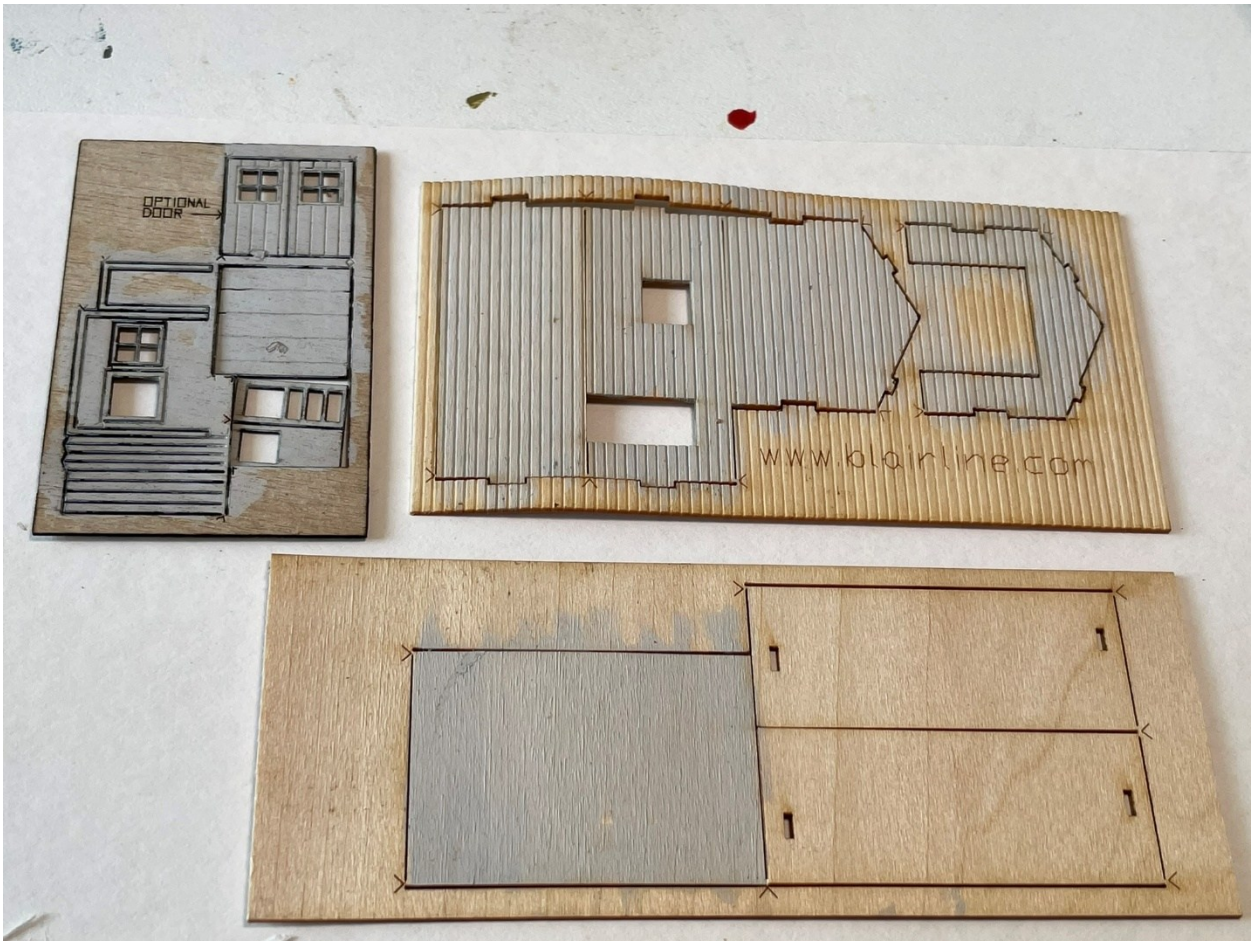
Building a Laser-Cut Wood Blair Line Garage Kit

Next up was this kit from Blair Line, which is very similar in design to the RS Laser one-car garage kit, but with fewer windows.

N-Circle_25-08-01_Garage-BlairLine_1

Like with the RS Laser kit, I started by painting the pieces before removing them. The wood walls in this kit are quite thin, and even with brushing water on the back sides, the Vallejo acrylic primer on the exterior surfaces caused them to warp significantly. But I placed a row of paint bottles on them to hold them flat while drying and that worked okay.

N-Circle_25-08-02_Garage-BlairLine_1



The instructions for this kit recommend assembling the main walls before assembling and attaching the windows and doors, but as with previous kits, I attached these features to the walls first. Like the RS Laser kit, these pieces are very thin peel-and stick

This kit also includes a choice of garage door styles, and again I used the modern roll-up door. Blair Line did not see the need to include roof rafters…

Once again attaching the peel-and-stick window and door frames was pretty much the same process as for previous laser-cut wood kits, so I won't include details here. Assembling the four main walls was very much like the RS Laser garage above and went fairly easily, as seen on the right in the RS Laser assembly photo in the section above.

This kit did not come with reinforcements for the inside corners, but I used the same 2 x 2 mm pieces as described above.

N-Circle_25-08-05_Garage-BlairLine_1

The next step was to attach the peel-and-stick corner trim boards to cover the tabs in the wall joints. As always, these are tricky to attach and generally result in some gap between them at the joint where they meet at the corner, which I filled with a bead line of white glue.

The kit comes with white peel-and-stick strips to use as roofing material. But rather than mess with coloring these, I used black paper shingles leftover from the RS Laser kit above – probably leftover because I did not space them as closely as they should be. But as before, they were easy to attach with white glue.

Glueing the roof panels to the walls was also straightforward for this kit. It has a tab-and-slot on the end of each panel, and with the slight warpage in the end walls they did not align exactly but they were easily put into place with a bit of pressure on the wall.

In these two photos of the completed garage zoomed in close, the Blair Lines garage came out a little better than the RS Laser garage.

N-Circle_25-08-12_Garage-BlairLine_1_Cropped

N-Circle_25-08-12_Garage-BlairLine_2_Cropped

This kit took about 4 hours to complete over 11 sessions, a little less time than the RS Laser garage due to not having the roof rafters assembly, but the detailed corner boards required more sessions of touchup paint.

Building a Laser-Cut Wood Atlas Garage Kit

The third kit was from Atlas, though the instructions say it was originally designed by The N Scale Architect in 2005. I guess Atlas bought their way into producing laser-cut wood kits. The Maple Sugar House from N-Circle Update 23 also was from The N-Scale Architect.

N-Circle_25-08-01_Garage-Atlas_1

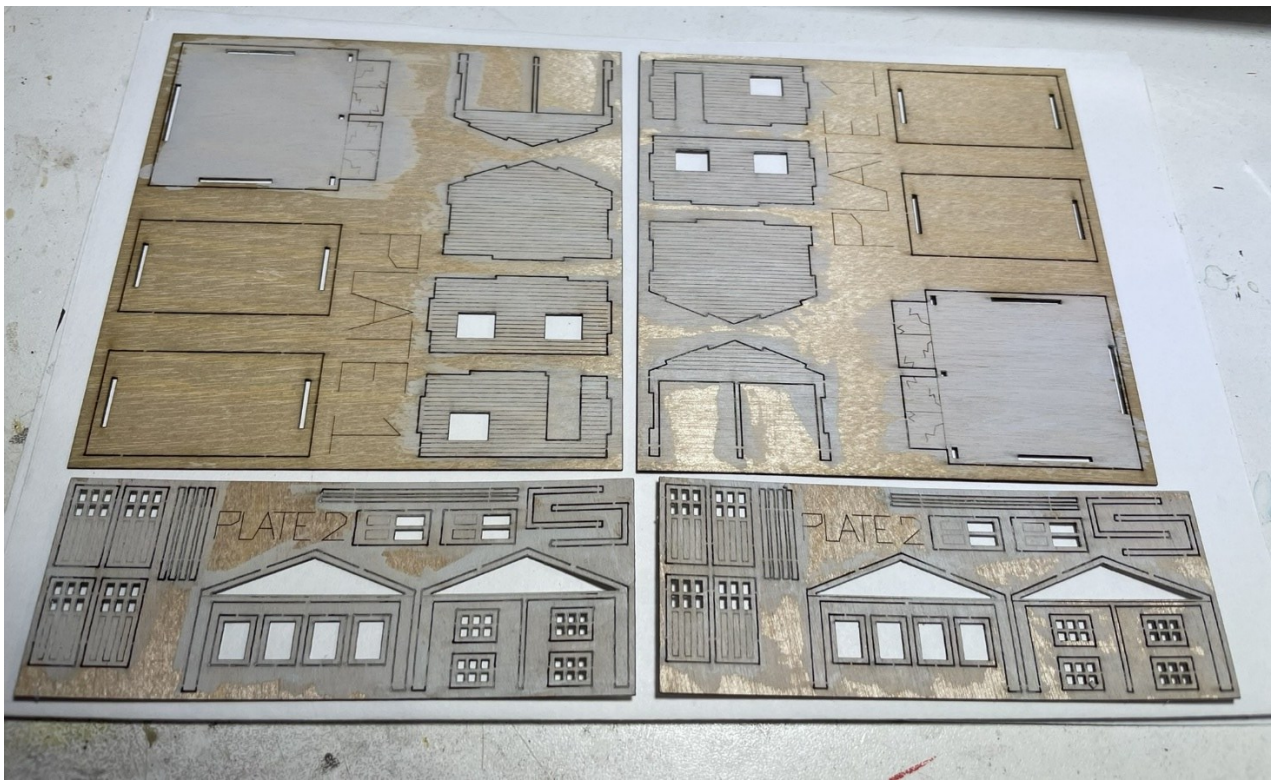
This kit comes with amazingly complete and detailed instructions, including a lot of advice on how to paint the kit, not just build it. Atlas has obviously been in the modeling business for a long time and has learned from the experience!

The kit includes parts to build two garages; I built both at the same time.

The first step was to apply a coat of Vallejo grey acrylic primer paint to the pieces before removing them from the plates, as seen here. The instructions say to remove them first before painting, but if you have been following along, you know I don't always follow the instructions… I would rather apply a good first coat, then remove the pieces from the plate and paint the edges while applying a second coat. Though the wood in this kit is thin, it showed minimal warping with the paint.

Note the strong similarity between these panels and those for The N-Scale Architect maple sugar house in N-Circle Update 23. For this kit I went with paint rather than ink weathering I used on the maple sugar house. And I kept the paint scheme simple with white walls and trim, to match the farmhouse in Update 9 and the church rectory in Update 26.

N-Circle_25-08-09_Garage-Atlas_Cropped



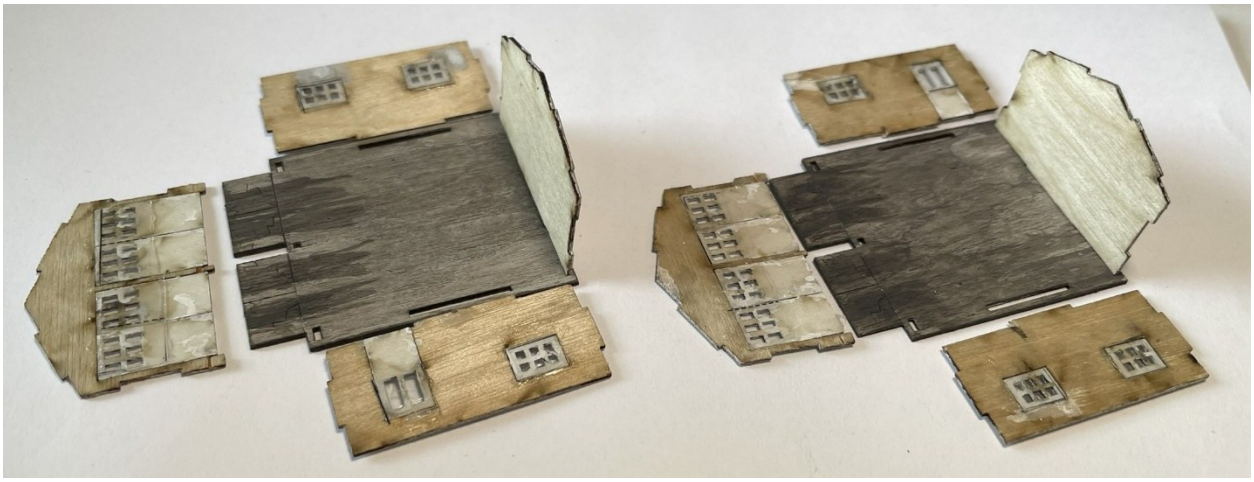
For the second coat of paint, I placed the separated pieces on a stiff clear plastic bag, a surface that they would not stick to as much with the wet paint. The instructions say you can put the pieces on the sticky side of masking tape while painting them, but I suspect that some of the peel-and-stick backing would come off when removing them from the tape. This already occurred on some small pieces as-is.

I did not use the peel-and-stick back surfaces to attach the window glazing to the inside of the window and door frames – I never even removed the paper backing from these pieces. Instead, I used Micros-Scale Kristal Klear to attach the clear plastic glazing from the inside.

The RS Laser and Blair Line garage kits above allowed the side walls to be interchangeable, the slots and tabs mate with the front and rear walls in either orientation. I built both with the side door on the right when facing from the front, for possible use with the current placement of the church rectory on the layout. However, in anticipation of using one of these older-style Atlas garages with the farmhouse, I wanted one with door on the left. But the side walls in this kit are not fully symmetrical. The tabs on the end walls are, but the tabs which engage with the floor are not. However, this was easily remedied with a sharp hobby knife…

Here we see the walls for the two garages before assembly, where the tabs on the bottom of the side walls in the set on the right have been trimmed to allow them to be inserted into the base in the swapped positions. They of course are now shorter than their slots but are easily aligned to the front and rear walls.

N-Circle_25-08-14_Garage-Atlas_Cropped



After the corner joints dried, I added 2 x 2 mm pieces of wood to reinforce them from the inside as described for previous kit builds, then added the corner and end trim boards. I will confess that I did not use the last two long pieces of thin trim board that are to go on the horizontal trim board on the two ends. This will never be noticeable, and at that point I had had enough “peel-and-stick fun” with tiny trim pieces!

I added the roof shingles last. This allowed painting the edges and eaves of the roof panels when applying the final white touchup paint. The shingles for this kit are very easy to apply, as they are a single rectangle for each side of the roof, cut from a paper sheet and attached with white glue. The peak cap on the top ends up with the white paper showing through on each side, but I used a dull No. 2 pencil to darken these edges fairly effectively. These sheet shingles do not produce the same three-dimensional look as the two previous garage kits, but the even rows of shingle lines produce a nice look.

The following three photos show the two completed garages. Note the swapping of the side panel with the door between the two – that modification worked out fine. At this close magnification, I would not say this was the highest quality modeling work, and like most of my kits, the rough finish of brush painted versus airbrush is apparent. Though I can’t imagine

airbrushing all of these tiny pieces, obviously other modelers do it. Nonetheless, these garages should be a good addition to the N-Circle scenery, as always, when viewed from a distance!

N-Circle_25-08-15_Garage-Atlas-1_Cropped

N-Circle_25-08-15_Garage-Atlas-2_Cropped

N-Circle_25-08-15_Garage-Atlas-3_Cropped

This Atlas kit took about 6.5 hours to complete over 13 sessions for both garages. Longer than for the individual garages above, though not twice as long due to the efficiencies of preparing paints, etc. for both at the same time. Using the same white paint on both the walls and the trim also reduced some of the touchup paint work required.

I labelled the underside of the base of all these garages, so I will know which-is-which in the future!

Comparing these three garage kits, the RS Laser kit was probably the most challenging, with its roof rafters, but all were very similar in the other detail pieces. As noted above, the peel-and-stick door and widow trim pieces in all three of these kits are very thin and fragile and generally prefer to stick to whatever implement you try to align them with than to their intended location…!

As discussed in the conclusions of N-Circle Update 25, laser-cut wood kits with peel-and-stick trim are more difficult to build than basic plastic styrene kits. In the hands of an experienced modeler, they can be a fun challenge that produces a nicely detailed structure. But if you have not attempted one, I would recommend buying and building one or two before filling your stack of “kits to build someday” with them!

Anyway, the whole point of building structures is to put them to use on your layout! I put the Atlas garage with the side door on the left to immediate use next to the farmhouse, to replace the under-sized IMEX out-of-the-box garage that was there previously - it was re-purposed to serve as a storage shed in the park scene. This two-car garage with old-style doors looks more appropriate for the farm scene. And note the doghouse with the farm dog guarding the property next to it! The other new doghouse can be seen to the left of the suburban house in the background … it’s a dog-friendly neighborhood!

N-Circle_25-08-16_Garage-Atlas

I then had to decide which one-car garage to use for the church rectory. I went with the RS Laser kit with its side door on the same side as the house entrances and the garage entry lip to extend towards the sidewalk. Obviously, the scenery panel under the rectory and garage needs to be updated with connecting sidewalks, etc., but the big black sedan disguises some of the deficiencies at the garage entrance!

N-Circle_25-08-16_Garage-RSLaser

The other Atlas garage and the Blair Line garage went into storage; I don’t have an obvious place for them on the layout for now.