N-Circle Railroad Update 6 – March 8, 2021

Since the last N-Circle Railroad update, I have wanted to build more structures for the many planned scenes. However, using styrene cement indoors in the winter creates a major fumes problem, as has been discussed in other postings to the NWV's education website. We live in a condominium, where the only standard double-hung windows are in the guest bedroom and kitchen in the front of the house, neither of which are good locations for doing model construction work. And all the windows across the back of our home are sliding door units, including in the train room. Since the condo association would not be supportive of placing an exhaust vent through an exterior wall, the only option is to exhaust through a sliding door, problematic to do in the cold winter months.

The following design is intended only for exhausting fumes from gluing or light brush painting – I sold my paint air brush a couple of years ago. The basic idea is to install a small electric fan over a hole cut in a 1x8 board, which can be fit in a partially open doorway. I used a 4 ½ inch fan purchased on Amazon which is intended as a replacement cooling fan in electrical systems.

The first photo shows cutting a hole in the board at a height a few inches higher than the intended work surface, in this case a portable table. I left a vertical strip in the center of the hole, to leave the board with more strength, since the center motor of the fan blocks part of this area anyway. I drilled multiple holes with a large wood chisel bit initially, then cut between them with a small hand saw. I then used a large semi-round file to round out and smooth the openings to a reasonable degree, but the resultant openings are admittedly not nice semi-circles, but that is not critical for air flow, and these openings are not visible in the final structure.

Vent_21-02-23_1

I mounted the fan first to thin wood strips placed vertically along the sides of the frame, then screwed these to the board. This leaves a gap between the fan frame and the board, which allows inserting a piece of cardboard to cover the hole in cold weather when the fan is off, but you may be leaving it in place in the doorway for a later work session. The drawer pull handle makes it easier to move and maneuver the setup into position.

Vent_21-02-23_2

A bracket on the opposite side of the board made from two steel L-brackets and wrapped in foam to protect the door paint holds the structure in place, so it will not fall in or out of the door opening. The door slides between the board and bracket, but not far enough to obstruct the air flow.

Vent_21-03-06_1

Here we see the completed unit in place in the train room doorway.

Vent_21-03-03_1

.

As is visible in the photo, there are air leaks around the board because it is not perfectly straight, so is not a perfect solution for multiple hours of work on a really cold day. But it is a reasonable seal for moderate days, extending the few months of Vermont summer when work can be done in the garage. Weatherstripping the edges of the board may help reduce the leaks.

In the final photo, we see the vent in use, for assembling the freight depot kit discussed below. Note the bottle holder block following the suggestion of Tim Wilmott in an earlier posting. And I place a plastic shaker cap from a salad dressing bottle on top of the glue bottle to reduce the outflux of fumes. The hole in the center of this cover is just large enough for the brush.

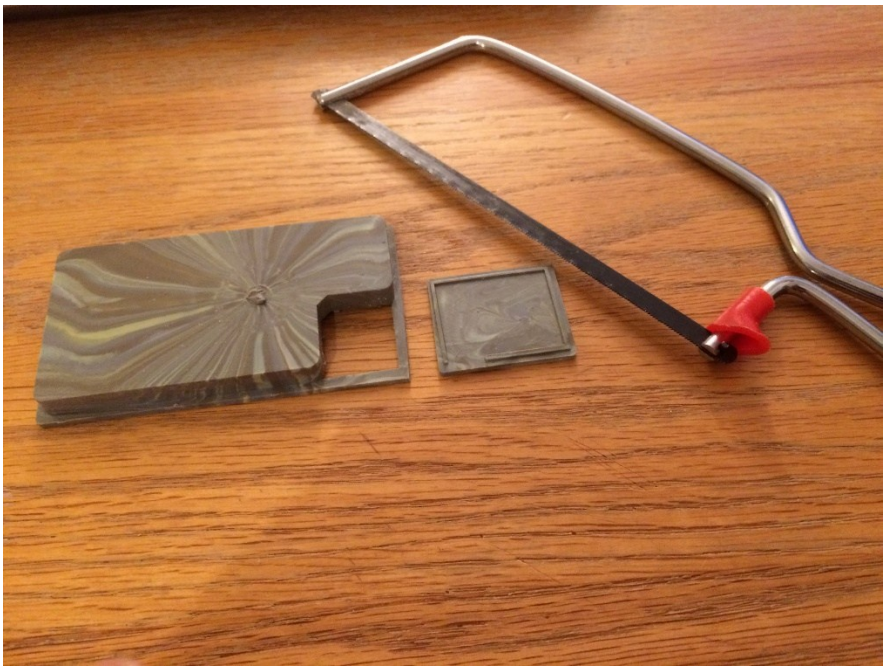
Vent_21-03-06_1

Next is a description of building and modifying a Heljan Freight House kit, part number B 641.

N-Circle_21-03-03_Heljan_FreightDepot_1

The kit has an extension on the main building, constructed on a single one-piece base. However, I was not sure I would want the extension in the scene(s) where the building will be used. Fortunately the kit includes a fourth wall for the extension, as it extends slightly beyond the main wall in the original design. So, step one was cutting the base with a micro saw.

N-Circle_21-03-03_Heljan_FreightDepot_3



I used Polly Scale “Vermont Green” on the main building, and “Light Green” on the extension, to make it look more weathered and provide some variation. The yellow door and window trim gives it a Central Vermont Railway look. I then finished with shades of brown and dark grey brushed on the loading docks at random to look like weathered boards. Some crates and barrels add visual interest and realism – I will eventually add a few dock worker figures and signs on the walls. The following photos show the finished model.

N-Circle_21-03-07_Heljan_FreightDepot_5

N-Circle_21-03-07_Heljan_FreightDepot_7

N-Circle_21-03-07_Heljan_FreightDepot_5

The last photo shows the extension separated from the main building. If it does not fit the final scene, it can be used elsewhere, either as a standalone structure, or an extension to another building.

As described in previous updates, the scenery for the N-Circle Railroad will be modular, with removeable scenery panels personalizing the fixed T-Track modules to model the multiple regions and periods envisioned for future operating sessions. The final topic of this update describes mockups of two period scenes for the Southwest freight yard module.

In the first photo below, the module is personalized as a 1980s Canadian National Trailer-on-Flat-Car (TOFC) yard. This provides us a closeup of the Walthers Mi-Jack kit first seen in my August 13, 2020 update. Cranes for TOFCs were not developed until the 1960s, so this crane would not be found in N-Circle 1950s scenes, but would have been in use in the 1980s. The scene is completed with various TOFC cars and standalone trailers, and a pair of CN tractors. I did not get out all my VTR semi-trucks for this shot, just the one TOFC!

Temporary black cardboard strips are laid between the tracks to create a paved lot surface. In a final scene, these will need to be better fitted, and then add some striping and dirt and oil stains, I will refine and detail the surfaces later. The yard office on the right will eventually receive signage and details too.

N-Circle_21-02-04_TOFC_Yard_1

The next photo shows the same Southwest freight yard module, re-personalized as a 1950s Canadian Pacific freight terminal. The scene uses the same “paved” inlays between the track, but the TOFC crane is replaced by temporary concrete loading ramps, which still require weathering and detailing and may be used later in a 1980s version of this scene. And I have added the newly-built freight depot structure described above. For the “final” 1950s version, I will replace these ramps with wood loading docks with a better fit to the width between the tracks and possibly another small freight transfer structure. (And I should have removed the modern yard office before taking this photo!)

The 1980s trucks from above are replaced by a Canadian Pacific Express semi-truck from Athearn, and van trucks from Classic Metal Works. A CP SW9/1200 switcher waits to shuffle cars in the yard, as a CP freight rounds the corner to drop off another string of cars. A Maine Central freight waits for the traffic to clear the mainline.

The CP switcher was purchased used from Father Berube – nice to see it in service again!

N-Circle_21-03-07_Freight_Yard_1

While this scene is on the southwest module of the N-Circle layout, as dictated by the fixed track plan, this meeting of the Canadian Pacific and Maine Central would have occurred in northeastern Vermont – perhaps St. Johnsbury? As stated previously, the N-Circle Railroad does not attempt to reproduce specific geographic locations.

And yes, the freight yard is a bit close to the suburban homes and the trailer park - the compromises of a small layout – I will have to add a hedgerow between them! Though I may be able to shrink the depth of the parking lots of the Northwest module freight transfer buildings seen in the background and described in earlier updates, which may allow moving the homes north a bit.

Since my previous N-Circle update, I have mostly been testing and upgrading 1950s northeast rolling stock and locomotives and recording videos and photos of them. The following concluding photo captures a Rutland freight waiting in the North Yard, as the caboose on the entering CV freight passes by. Meanwhile, the CV 8093 S-2 switcher waits to switch out food service boxcars at the local warehouses.

N-Circle_21-02-05_North_Yard_1