N-Circle Railroad Update 36 – May 29, 2026

Building Laser-Cut Wood Structures for a Park Scene

This update is a follow-on to Update 35, completing more structures for the last major scene to be developed on the N-Circle Railroad layout, the park scene on the east side. In this update I will build two more structures for future use in the public area of the park.

Building the GC Laser Open Storage Shed Kit #0296

As noted at the end of N-Circle Update 32, I still have a small pile of small laser-cut wood kits in inventory to build. So, while I was on a roll this spring…

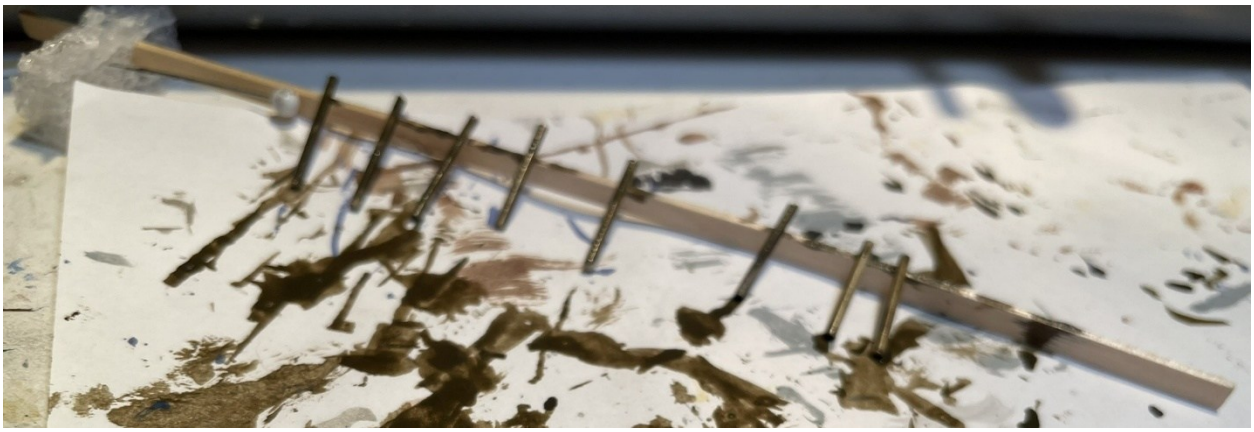
I started with the Open Storage Shed kit #0296 from GC Laser. I wasn't sure if I would use this structure in the park or as an equipment storage shed for the farm. At 41 mm square, it is a bit small for use to hold large farm equipment, so I decided to use it for the future large park scene to hold the lawn tractor and other equipment. The packaging label is shown here for reference.

N-Circle_26-03-31_OpenStorageShed

The instructions are fairly good, though the roofing is a puzzler, I will discuss that later.

The instructions provide a nice template for cutting the white styrene poles to length and with the required angle on one end. I painted them dark brown to look like aged wood. They required a couple of coats to cover. To paint them on all sides for the first coat, I propped them against a wooden coffee stirrer so they were only supported at two points, so they would not just be stuck to the workbench when dry. However, they still stuck to the support stick, leaving some blemishes requiring touchups. The next photo shows this primitive setup.

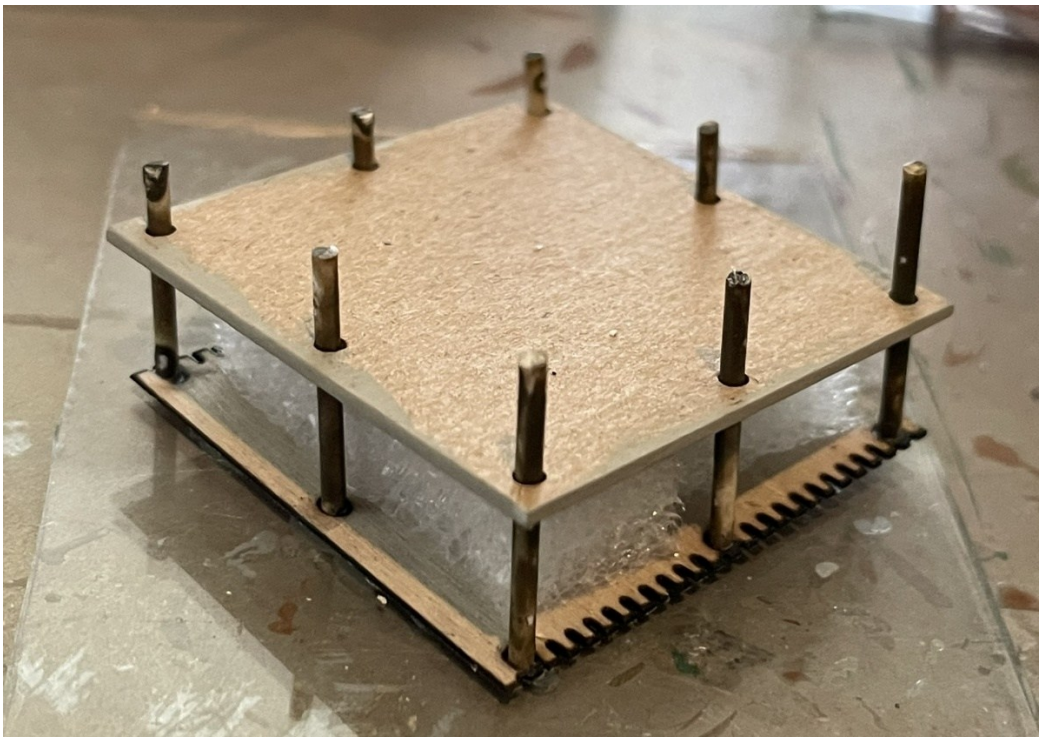
N-Circle_26-04-02_OpenStorageShed_Cropped



The kit can be built with or without using the wood floor. I choose to attach the floor to give the structure more strength and stability, but for those placing it in a permanent location on a layout, the poles could just be sunk into a dirt floor. I painted the floor to look like a concrete pad.

Assembling the poles is not “fun.” There is no way you will be able to glue all eight poles in place to the roof and the floor at the same time. I placed the roof on a glass plate, placed some 3/8-inch foam blocks on the roof to support the floor plate, then inserted the poles through the holes in the floor and into the holes in the roof. It is important to keep track of the three lengths of the poles and insert them in the correct positions. It is not so important to worry about the alignment of the angled ends, as I found the poles did not all fit into the holes in the roof. So, a drop of white glue will hopefully hold the poles into the hole indentations in the roof, they are not glued to the floor at this point.

N-Circle_26-04-03_OpenStorageShed_Cropped



Originally, I intended to apply a second coat of brown paint to the poles next, when they would all be held separate and vertical, without risking getting paint on the floor. But I realized that I had no confidence that I would be able to remove the floor, then realign all eight poles to slide it back on later without breaking the glue joints to the roof.

So, after the first round of pole glue joints were dry, I slid the floor down to the ends of the poles and glued it in place with more drops of glue applied to the underside. Three poles broke away from the roof in this process and had to be re-aligned. Once all eight poles were in place, I added a bit more glue around the poles on the inner surface of both the roof and the floor.

Later I added the four horizontal support boards under the roof, they hopefully will add some strength to this fragile structure.

When this was all dry, I then carefully applied the second coat of paint on the poles. With them all now held separate and vertical, this was much easier than the first coat on the loose poles.

Not all the poles aligned to the same length in their respective hole pairs, so a couple protruded under the floor base and had to be trimmed with sprue cutters. This was done successfully without dislodging any parts.

I did not use their roofing material…it was just slots cut in a rectangle of thin material and I could not figure out how to use it. Instead, I used black tarpaper strips leftover from previous kits, brushed on some weathering chalks, then sprayed the roof with Testor's Dullcote.

I did not build the pallets and wood reels that came in the kit – the pieces are very tiny and flimsy and looked like they would be very fussy to assemble, and I already have plenty of more sturdy pallets in my detail parts box if I need them.

To enhance the scenic interest, I added one of the 3-D printed woodsheds described in N-Circle Update 35 as a storage area in the rear, after repainting the roof dark grey, as it would probably not have a metal roof, being under the shed roof. I also added a storage cabinet and an open trash barrel from the parts box.

In these photos of the completed structure, we can see that it leans a bit to the starboard side. A bit more care and bracing of the sides during the drying of the glue for the poles could have improved this. But it makes a nice, covered area to store the big park lawn tractor!

N-Circle_26-05-04_OpenStorageShed_3_Cropped

N-Circle_26-05-04_OpenStorageShed_4_Cropped

This project took a bit over three hours to complete over six sessions, including adding the interior details. So, this simple kit could be completed in less than three hours by most modelers.

Building a Laser-Cut Wood Retreat and Dance Pavilion Building Kit

I purchased a large, covered pavilion kit on eBay in 2022 for use in the public area of the park, together with the gazebo kit discussed in N-Circle Update 34 from the same vendor. Like the gazebo, this kit came in a plastic bag with no markings for a manufacturer.

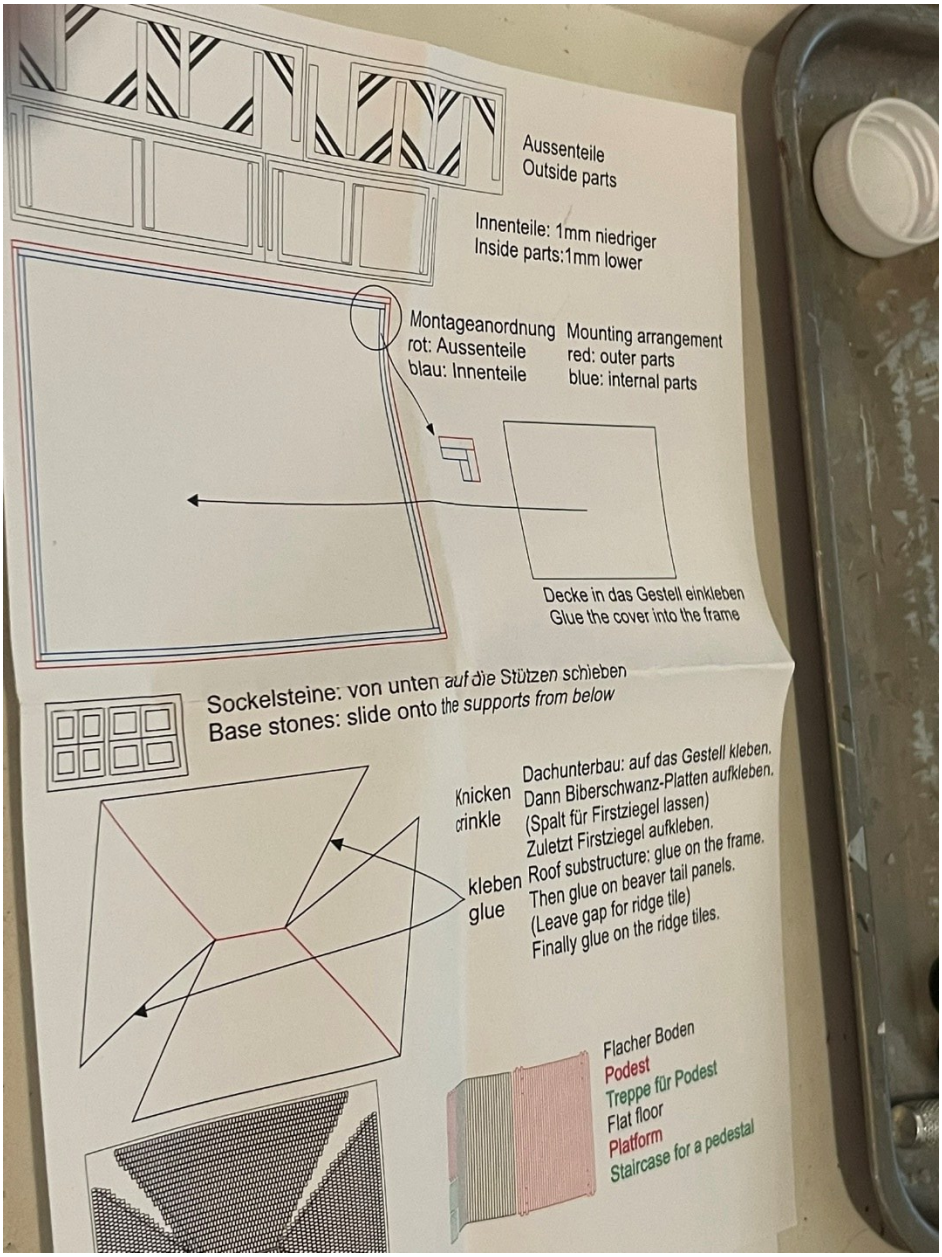
However, I was able to find my purchase in the eBay archives and capture a photo of what it is supposed to look like from the original listing – also the gazebo. But the vendor no longer has listings on eBay, so I could not find more about it.

N-Circle_26-03-31_DancePavilion_eBayPhoto

Note the separate floor units which do not fill the whole area. They apparently are intended to create a wood stage and dance floor on a dirt floor. But I chose to add a full floor using a plate of wood leftover from a previous kit build, painted to look like concrete. The piece I had was exactly the needed 62 mm wide but was 98 mm long, which is 21 mm longer than the pavilion. I decided to use it as-as, creating an extension to the concrete pad area outside the covered area.

The kit did come with instructions, in both English and what appears to be German. There was no package label, but the instruction sheet is shown here for reference.

N-Circle_26-03-31_DancePavilion_1



The instructions are very cryptic, but adequate for this simple kit, if you study them carefully. This was an interesting kit, so I will discuss building it in some detail, even though you are unlikely to find one to build yourself.

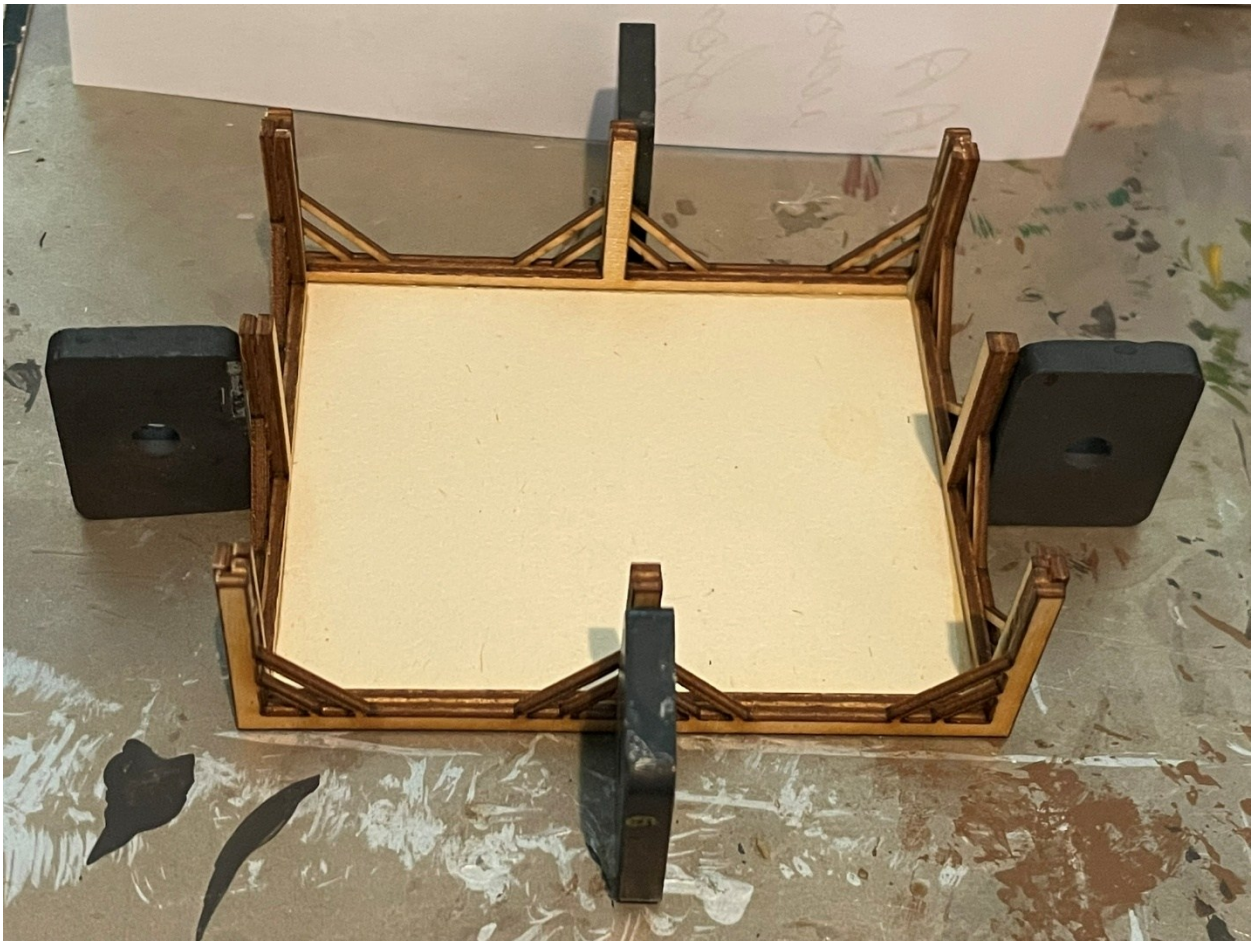
It was interesting that the outer walls are comprised of a two-layer sandwich, where the outer layer has the lattice work and is a bit longer so the joints dovetail together at the corners. I used wood glue to glue the sections together, placing the faces with burn marks from the laser-cutting inwards to the glue joint. These sandwiches must be carefully aligned so that the corner joints

will work later. I clamped them between two glass plates with a weight on top to minimize wood warping during glue drying, as seen in the next photo.

N-Circle_26-03-31_DancePavilion_2

The laser-cut pieces for this kit were very well cut – the two sections for each wall aligned very well, as did the four walls when placed around the ceiling plate. Here we see gluing the four walls to the ceiling plate, using magnets to hold them while the wood glue dried. You want to attach all four sides at the same time, so that you can get the four corners aligned while the glue is still wet.

N-Circle_26-04-01_DancePavilion



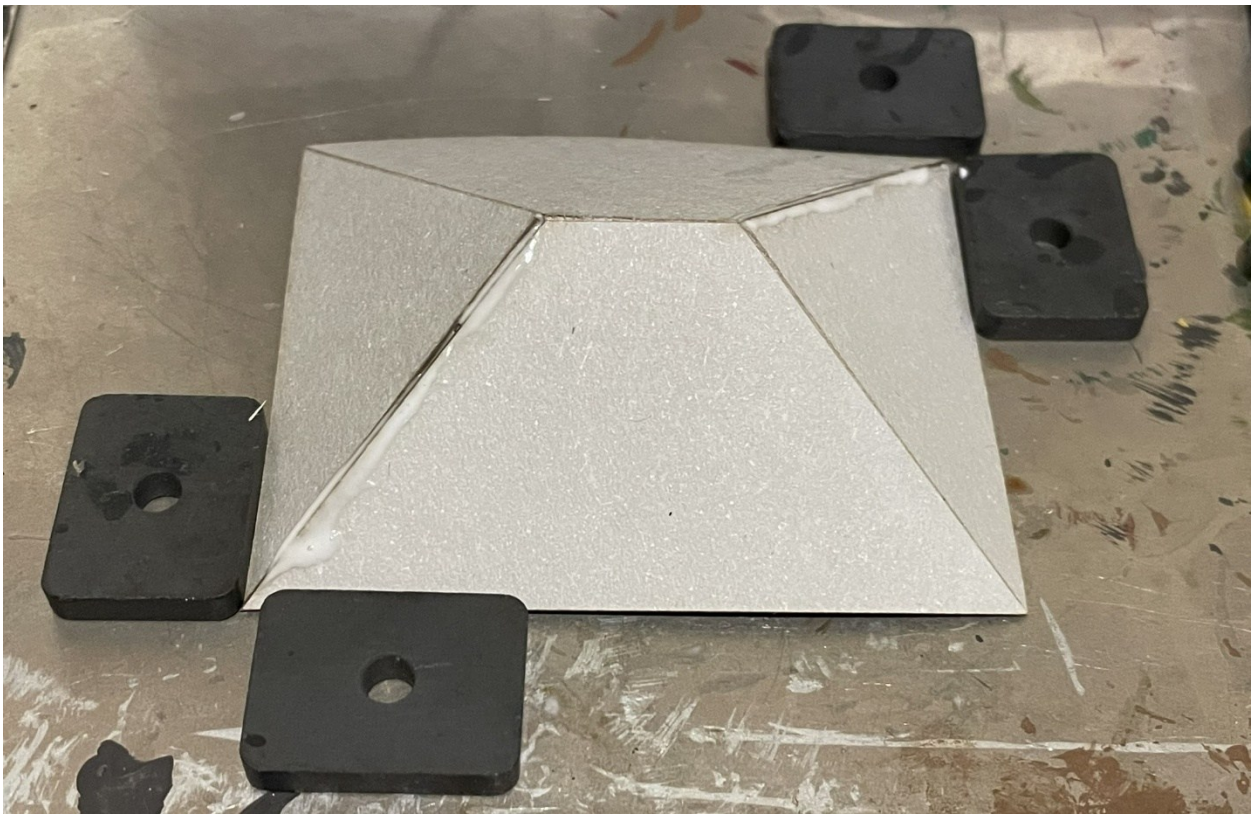
As can be seen in the advertising photo at the beginning of this section, the kit comes with pre-cut bases to go around the bottom of the side posts. The instructions say to just “slide onto the supports from below.” But unless you anticipated this in advance and clamped the bottom of all the posts together very tightly, this isn’t happening. Only a couple of my posts fit into the bases. But rather than whittle down the ends of the posts, I just didn’t use the rings. They are not necessary and no one would notice their absence if they were not familiar with the kit. Plus, for my build, the piece of scrap wood I used for the floor happened to be almost exactly the width of the structure, so these bases would have overhung the concrete floor a bit, which would have looked worse than having no bases at all. So, the bases went in the wood scraps box for use for something “someday.”

This kit highlights one of the challenges of laser-cut wood kits: the laser-cut edges of the wood are much darker than the faces, this is very noticeable in the previous photo. This is not a problem if the kit is painted with solid colors or the edges are covered with trim pieces like on buildings described in previous N-Circle Updates. But it is a problem if you want to just weather

the wood. Therefore, I decided to paint the wall posts with the same dark Polly Scale “Railroad Tie Brown” I used on other wood structures for the park to bring everything together aesthetically.

The roof panels are made from a folded piece of thin cardboard. The instructions just say: “glue on the frame.” But it was clear that it would not be easy to hold the folded piece in the proper alignment with just a bead of glue around the edge. Therefore, I used tape to hold the folds in place initially, then applied white glue on the joints and used magnets to hold it in place square to dry, as seen here.

N-Circle_26-04-05_DancePavilion_Cropped



This approach worked well, as the roof could then be glued to the top of the structure squarely with no raised corners the next day.

Attaching the thin pre-cut sheets of shingles roofing material with white glue was easy. They fit the structure correctly when held in place with “the human clamp” for a minute or two. After they were set I added a bead of glue in the narrow gaps between the sections to create a better surface for adding the ridge pole flashing over them the next day. The flashing pieces also were well cut and installed easily. However, they are very narrow, just barely covering the joint. I think I prefer it when these pieces are wider and can be scored down the middle and folded to overlap both sides of the roof joint.

Originally, I intended to paint the roof shingles, but I like this shade of brown and decided to just add some weathering chalks and a spray coat of Testor’s Dullcote. There are already many dark grey or black roofs on the N-Circle layout, so a little diversity would be good!

As stated before, the laser-cut pieces for this kit were very well cut – the incredibly tiny notches in the side walls for the raised stage fit together perfectly. But to disguise the different colors of the notch edges at the corners I painted the sides of the floor all the way around with the same dark brown as the pavilion sides.

To detail the pavilion, I bought a set of six rock band musicians, Noch part number 36839, and attached them to the stage. To complete this scene, I created amplifiers and speakers from rectangles of wood cut from sprues from laser wood kits and “painted” them black with a Sharpie marker before gluing them to the stage.

In a similar manner I attached a collection of dancers to the adjacent dance floor, taken from my collection of various human figures. Attaching human figures to stand upright on two feet out in the open can be tricky. I dipped the feet into a liberal amount of superglue, then propped the figures in place to dry using small blocks of foam, as seen here.

N-Circle_26-05-22_DancePavilion_Cropped

I glued the stage and dance floor to the base, then added a storage cabinet for storing equipment for the bandstand and a trash barrel. I also added benches with people in front and more bystanders.

Here we see the completed interior before adding the roof. I wanted to capture all this detail before covering it with the roof!

N-Circle_26-05-28_DancePavilion_1_Cropped

N-Circle_26-05-28_DancePavilion_2_Cropped

I attached the roof structure to the base with a drop of white glue on the four corner posts – I didn't want to attach it too firmly in case I want to remove it someday to add more details. This structure will not get much handling on my home layout so it should be sturdy enough.

As I final touch, I decaled a truck for the band: "Random Logic," named after a friend's old band. The truck is a Gloor Craft 1965 Chevrolet van with custom decals made using the process described previously in N-Circle Update 16. The truck is a bit too modern for the 1950s scenes, but it is "close enough" and generic enough to use in both 1950s and 1980s scenes. I used the wheel masks introduced in N-Circle Update 13 to mask the wheels when spraying with Testor's GlossCote so they will not be shiny.

N-Circle_26-05-28_DancePavilion_10_Cropped

In these final photos we see a young couple from the Woodland Scenics “Lovers” figures set added next the front column after the roof structure was in place.

N-Circle_26-05-28_DancePavilion_8_Cropped

N-Circle_26-05-28_DancePavilion_9_Cropped

At completion, this pavilion build is almost an N-Circle “micro-scene” by itself, but it will be incorporated into a larger micro-scene for a public area of the park which will include three laser-cut wood food stands, to be described in a future N-Circle Update report.

But here we see it placed temporarily on the east side of the N-Circle layout next to the new open storage shed described above and other park structures. A row of hot-rod coupes driven by the young dancers completes the scene!

N-Circle_26-05-28_DancePavilion_12_Cropped

This project took about seven hours to complete over nineteen sessions, but that includes the time to add all the people figures and detail parts. The structure itself could probably be completed in less than four hours, being of similar complexity to the open shed kit discussed above.

And I realized while working on this project that a town park near us just constructed a pavilion very similar to this model!

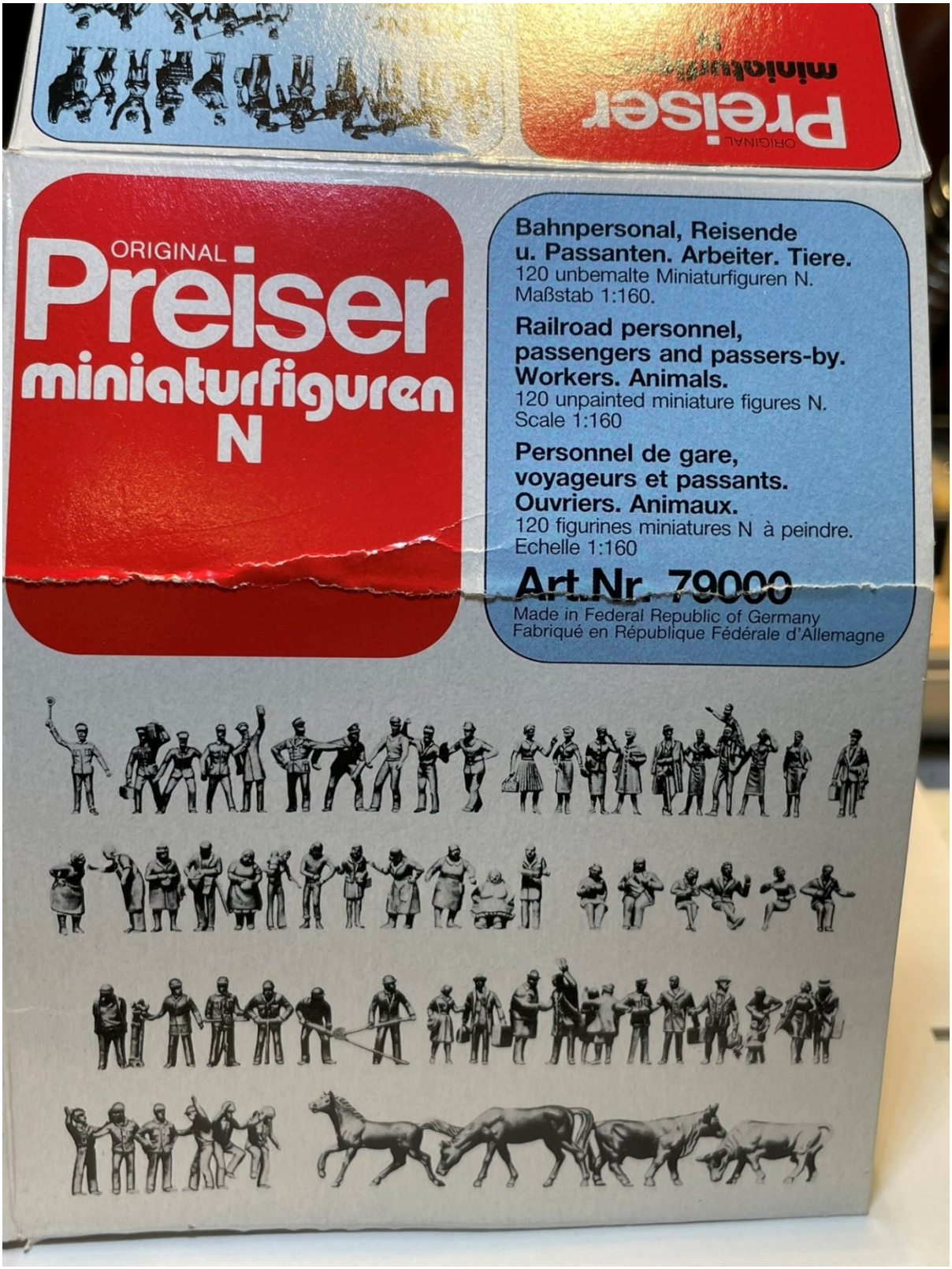
N-Circle_26-05-11_DancePavilion_Cropped

Mass Production Painting of People Figures

After building the band scene for the dance pavilion, I realized that I did not have suitable figures for dancers on the dance floor. So, time to get out of storage the set of 120 unpainted people and animal figures made by Preiser, another 72 from Walthers, previously Noch, and a collection of 37 3-D printed workmen. The packaging labels are shown here for reference.

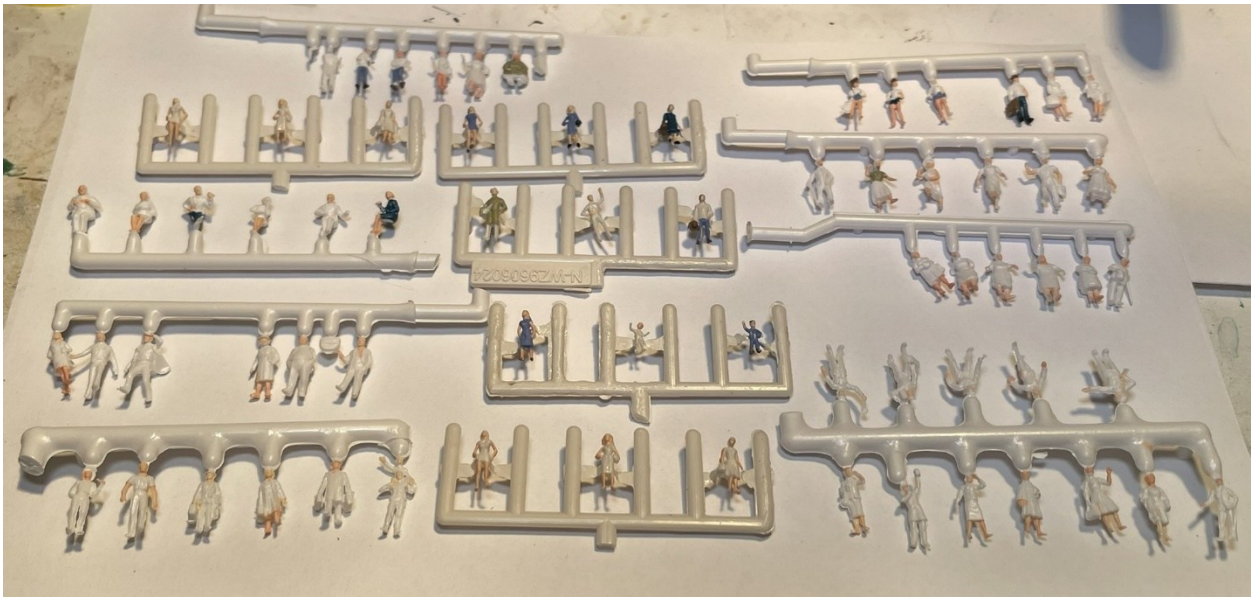
N-Circle_26-05-01_Figures_1

N-Circle_26-05-01_Figures_2



I had fully painted a few of them in late 2021 for the mini golf course in Update 10 and the fuel depot in Update 11. At the time I added flesh tone faces to most of them but didn't finish the clothing. Here we see some of them before this project started.

N-Circle_26-05-01_Figures_3_Cropped.



I paint the figures while still on the sprues – it is much easier to hold and handle them! Then the final touchup of the tops of the heads or bottom of the feet at the point of attachment can be done after they are removed from the sprues with sprue cutters.

The workmen were separate figures, not on sprues. I found them reasonable to do by placing them on a piece of white copier paper and holding them down by the feet with a fingernail.

For the flesh tone on the figures done previously, I used a 12-to-1 mix of a light tan and a bright red, just mixing a few drops in a bottle cap, as you don't need much paint here. For this round I added orange to the tan, this worked equally well. After doing an initial group of figures, I started adding drops of brown paint to the mix to create some ethnic diversity in the crowd.

For the clothing, I mixed various shades of different colors, starting with a base color, then adding drops of other colors to create slowly evolving new shades. I usually start with a dark primary color, then slowly add drops of a light tan rather than white to create muted colors. With this work, you are not trying to match any specific colors like painting locomotives, just creating a diversity of colors across the figures. And unlike many of the early lower quality pre-painted figures available in N-scale, you don't really want bright colors – you don't see them often on people on the street, especially not back in the 1950s.

Here we see the bottle cap mixing palettes and a toothpick for applying the paints.

N-Circle_26-05-04_Figures

Some of the painting was done with a micro brush but most was with the sharp end of a long wood toothpick like used to hold sandwiches together. A regular paint brush is too large for most of the detail work, where the toothpick will take a tiny drop of paint. Plus, you don't have to keep cleaning the toothpick to change colors, I have a set of them ready to go as needed, and a quick wipe of the tip on a paper towel and it is ready for the next color.

I like to start with the flesh-colored face and exposed arms and legs, then do the clothing. If the blob of paint on the face over-runs, you can run the clothing paint edge up over it, to hopefully produce a good transition. And all the clothing is solid colors; I don't attempt N-scale plaids and floral patterns…!

The clothing paint sometimes runs up on the exposed flesh areas, but a final touchup with spots of flesh tone remedies that. And no, I made no attempt to paint on eyes or other facial features. The plastic molding has some facial shapes in the surfaces which creates color variation across the faces, and no one can see N-scale faces from any distance anyway!

A few challenges to point out from this experience: when there is a tight space between a figure's arm and torso it is very difficult to get paint into this gap even with the sharp end of a toothpick! Also, most of the Noch figures were attached to the sprue at two points on the sides of the torso, rather than at the scalp or feet. This requires color-matching to cover the white spot in the clothing when cut away from the sprue, which can be difficult if the clothing was painted with a mixed, not easily reproduced color. However, I developed a trick for this: there are usually two sprue connection points, one on the upper body and one on the lower. You can cut away one and paint the upper or lower article of clothing while the figure is still connected to the sprue by the other point. Then you only have one color of paint to apply after removing the figure completely from the sprue.

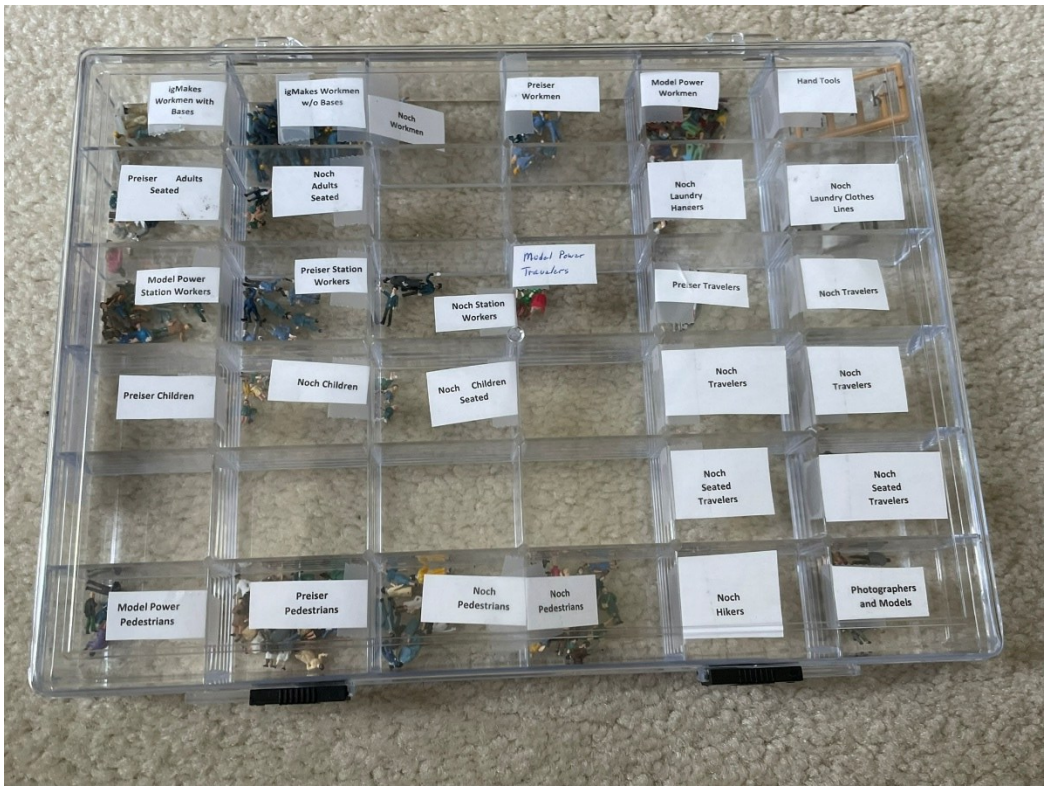
Here is a photo of a representative set of the completed figures. A few of these still have white sections not yet painted.

N-Circle_26-05-14_Figures_Cropped

Initially I completed 88 of the Preiser and Noch figures, leaving an almost equal number to finish in the future. Then, having all the paints out on the workbench and being inspired, I went ahead and completed all of them, interspersed with working on other projects at the same time. I did not log my time for this project, but altogether I painted around 200 figures over a couple of weeks – many individual sessions to allow one color to dry before moving on to the next. I now have more figures than I will likely ever use, and expect never to need to paint general-use people figures again…never is soon enough for me… While this was interesting, somewhat creative work, after doing this, I can tell you: If you embark on a similar task, you will gain a higher respect for the folks who produce the commercially available painted N-scale people figures!

But they now are sorted and categorized in a multi-compartment clear plastic storage case for easy access for future use. This will make it a whole lot easier to find a seated adult for a park bench or a dock worker than having to sort through 200 tiny figures! They will supplement pre-painted figures I have already purchased for specific planned micro-scenes for the layout. And I gave away a few for use on NWV T-Trak modules.

N-Circle_26-05-27_Figures



To date there have been only a few people figures on the N-Circle layout – a few pre-painted figures were added in the recent micro-scenes developed in Update 34, and the earlier gas station and fuel depot scenes, but now with the completion of this project, the layout should slowly “come to life”!

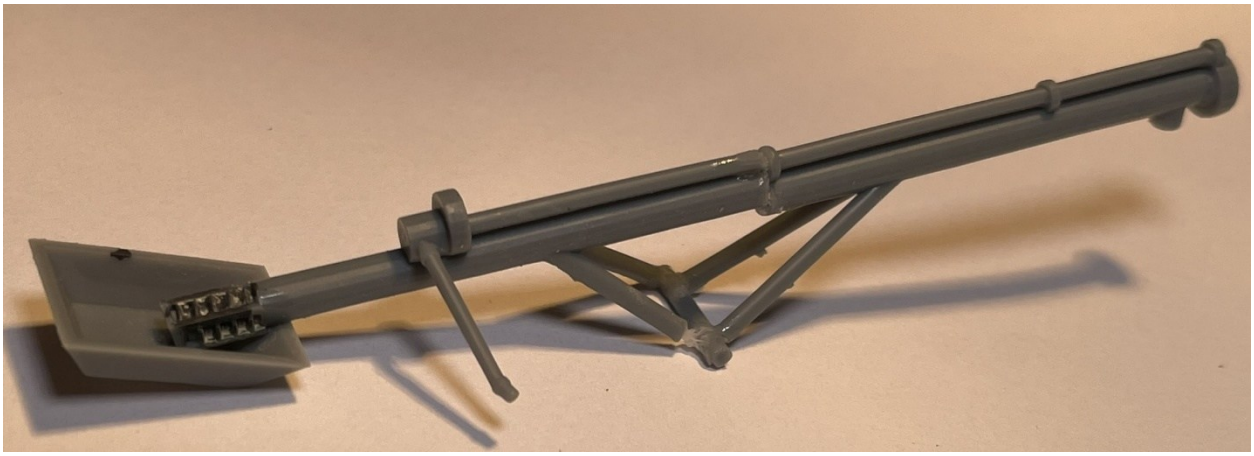
Kit Bashing a Portable Grain Auger

As a brief diversion from building structures and micro-scenes, I modified a portable grain auger purchased on eBay from Whistle Stop Models, intending to use it at the Wayne Feeds Mill. It was designed and listed as N-Scale, but as can be seen in this “Before” photo, it was very tall. The output pipe on the far end of the auger is 50 mm high, while the grain truck is only 20 mm high.

WhistleStop_GrainAuger_2026-04-19_Cropped

A bit of web research verified that the model is probably prototypically correct, as these augers are used for filling free-standing grain silos. However, I did not need this height for the Wayne Feeds grain mill, I just wanted a smaller piece for parking on the grounds with the trucks. Therefore, I cut a section out of the middle of the auger, then shortened both sets of legs. The shorter legs are also narrower, so I cut the wheels off the ends of the axle and created a proportionally shorter axle. I then glued everything back together with superglue as seen here, before re-attaching the wheels.

WhistleStop_GrainAuger_2026-04-21_Cropped



I painted the body grey with a few bright metal parts, brown grain residue in the hopper, and a couple of orange warning placards. As we see in the final photos, in the process of making the shortened auger and legs sections work out to align, the whole structure ended up a bit shorter than intended. And apparently the superglued center joint slipped after initial alignment, so there is a kink in the pipe. So, another modeling lesson: “Always double-check the alignment of a glued joint before walking away!” So this auger didn’t end up a “front page” quality modeling success, but it will just be parked in its lowered “transport” configuration in the yard of the Wayne Feeds Mill, not actually be shown in use, so these defects in design and construction will not be obvious, but it will add a nice detail to the scene.

N-Circle_2026-05-04_WhistleStop_GrainAuger_1_Cropped

In this final photo we see the grain auger parked by the Wayne Feeds Mill with the new storage shed discussed above added to the line of buildings in the temporary park scene in the distance. There is much more work to be done to improve the scenery on this east end of the N-Circle layout, to be discussed in an N-Circle Update Report soon!

N-Circle_2026-05-04_WhistleStop_GrainAuger_2