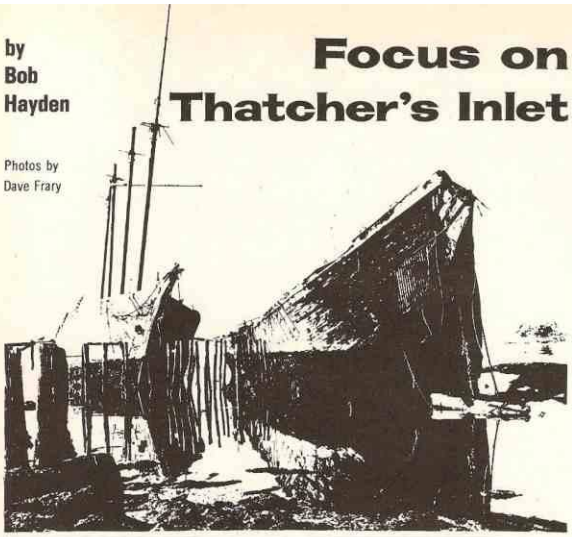
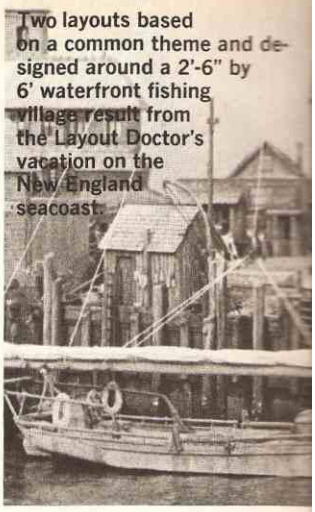
by
Bob
Hayden

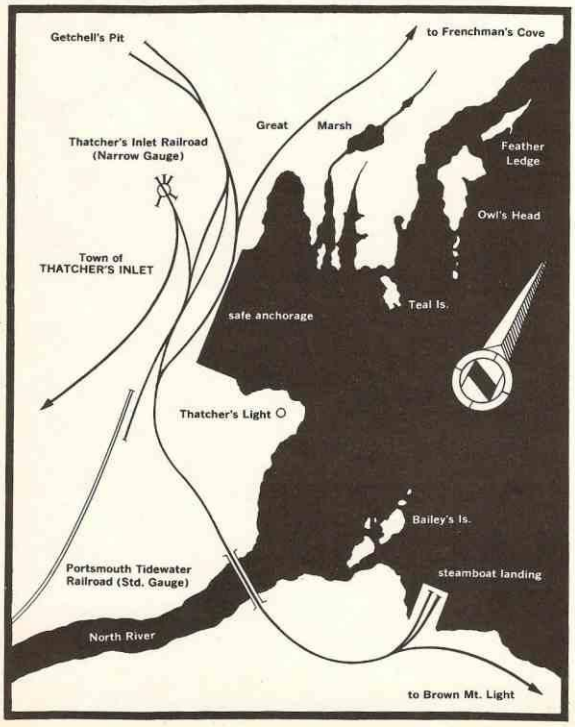
Focus on Thatcher's Inlet

Photos by
Dave Frary





Two layouts based on a common theme and designed around a 2'-6" by 6' waterfront fishing village result from the Layout Doctor's vacation on the New England seacoast.

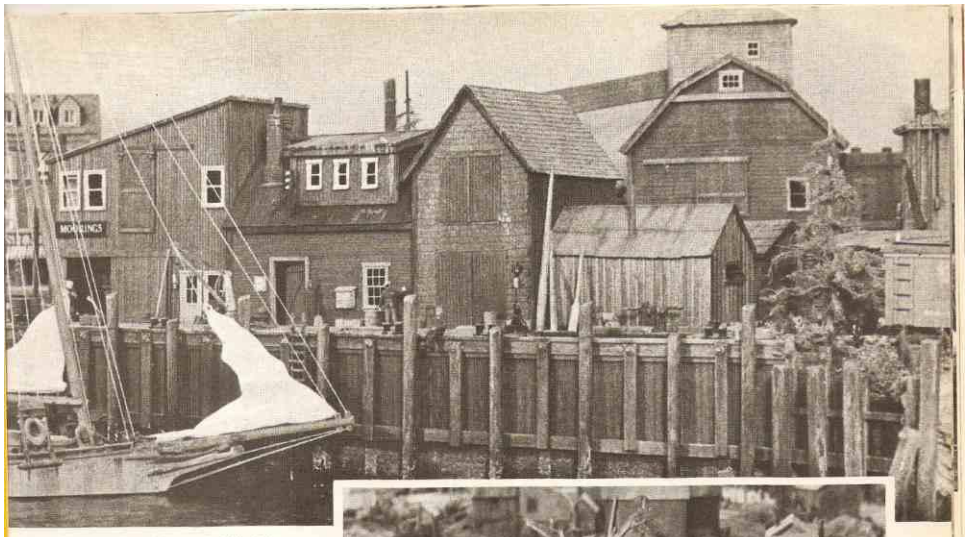


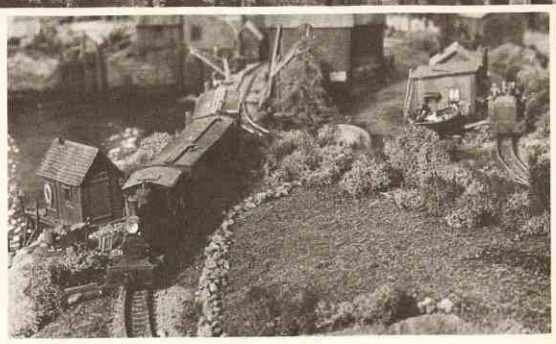
Part One of Four Parts

Once a year, like most of us I guess, RMC's portly little Layout Doctor gets away from the rigors of peddling the various D.C. motor snake oils and track cleaners in his black bag to sickly model pikes, and hies himself and his little missus off to some remote corner of the world where O, S, HO, N and other lilliputian woes are well-nigh unheard of. This past year he spent a peaceful month in a tiny seacoast hamlet "down east" and came back to his office fairly bursting at the seams to jot down a trackplan or two on his drawing board.

Anyone who goes down by the sea or to a large inland lake shore with ferry connections or railroad-to-steamship transfer facilities can't help but be swept up in the myriad of sights, sounds, and smells that comprise the romance of a busy waterfront railhead. The angular lines of structures, loading derricks, and railroad equipment contrast sharply with the crisp curves of nautical architecture, and the stop and go of railroad activities is set against the gentle but constant motion of the tides beneath the wharves. The lordly coming and going of great silent ships combines with the squeal of steel flange against steel rail to create an atmosphere of intense activity seldom rivaled by railroad-only operations.

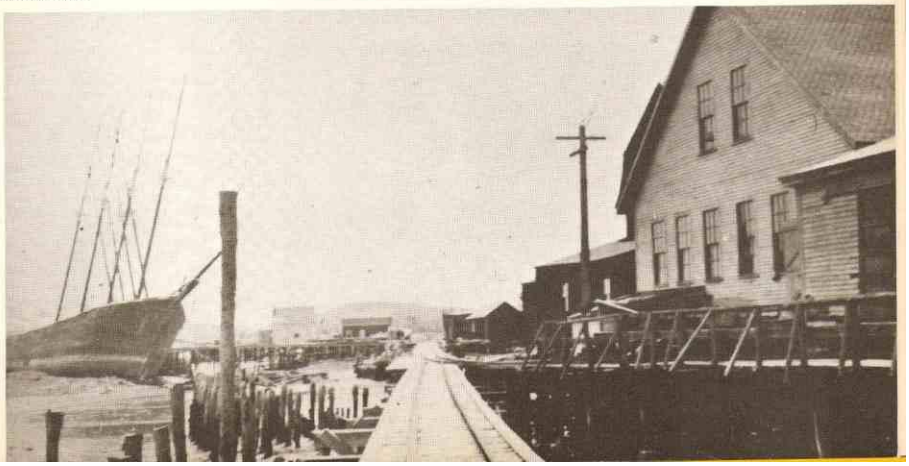
Like the majority of us, when the Layout Doctor returned to the far less stimulating confines of his everyday world, he couldn't seem to put a finger on the precise constituent parts of the "atmosphere" that had so deeply impressed him on the





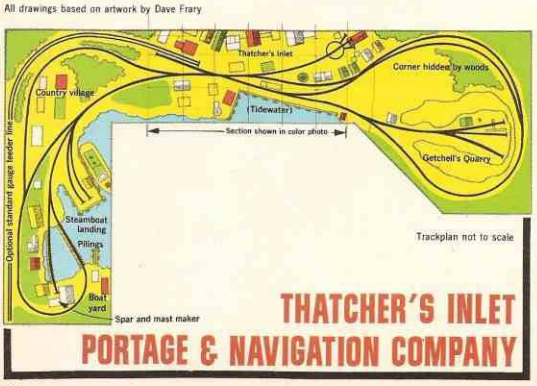
Close-up views (above and right) of the narrow gauge Thatcher's Inlet waterfront area show commercially available items such as Pyro boat, N scale flexible track and steam engine which were modified for use on HOn2-1/2 layout, the end result being a successful model of a railroad serving a harbor with a minimum of scratchbuilding effort. Actual modifications to models will be covered in a later part of this series.

Pile trestling (below), wharf, creamery siding and lumber ships in this WW&F scene at Wiscasset, Maine, around 1925 combine to show the atmosphere Frary and Hayden attempted to simulate with the Thatcher's Inlet. This series will in turn attempt to explain their modeling techniques for others interested in scaling down a given prototype theme from waterfronts to logging operations.



This is the Thatcher's Inlet Railroad which will be covered in detail in this four-part series. It is obviously only a part of a larger railroad which should be designed to fit each modeler's own space requirements. Two suggestions are shown in the rough sketches below. Some may find it necessary to revise trackage in basic Thatcher's Inlet module itself to suit their needs.

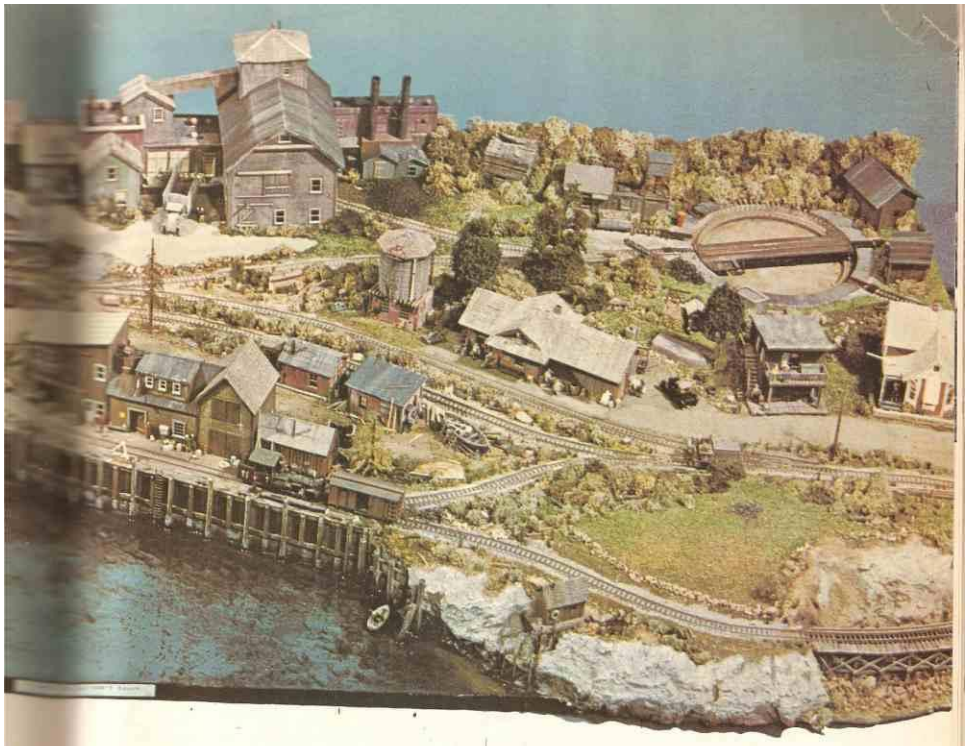
All drawings based on artwork by Dave Frary



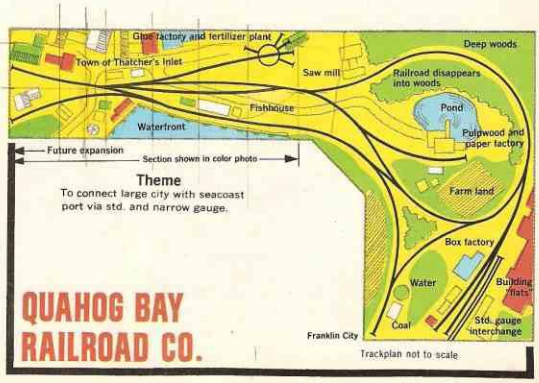
spot. Since it's really the "feel" of the waterfront he was after, rather than any single prototype feature which he could model from plans, he'd have been at a loss as to where to turn for information without a bit of help from a "visiting fireman" with an unorthodox idea or two.

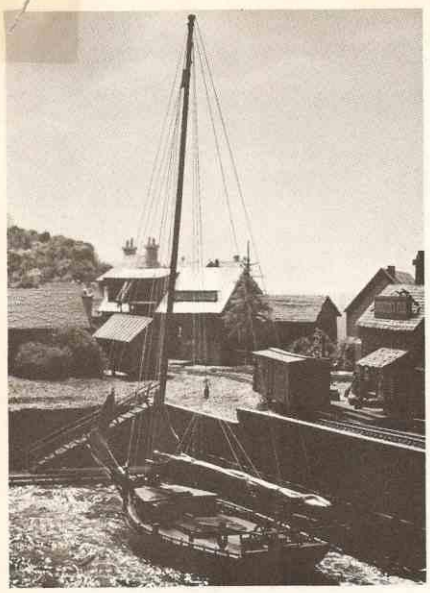
The unorthodox idea, of course, is researching a "slice of authentic atmosphere" from the scene or part of the country that you're out to capture—"researching" done in a markedly different manner from most preparation for modeling projects.

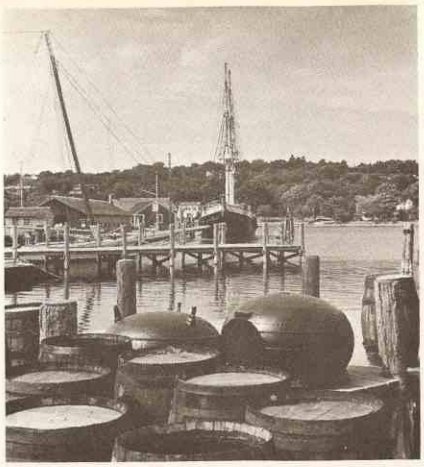
First stop is the public library—a far cry from the basement workbench, perhaps, but the best place to leisurely page through a variety of picture-type books and regional magazines that deal with the area you're out to capture the essence of. After looking through the books once, give a longer stare to those photos that strike you as being especially typical or novel, and make a few notes to yourself or perhaps even a sketch or two. The trick is to isolate one or two elements that *always*



seem to be present—and then be *sure* to include them in your model setting. This "element" includes such things in the waterfront scene as the architectual features of the buildings, the compressed "verticality" of high peaked roofs, the use of a nearly standard type of twelve-pane window frame, and the predominance of wood-shingled surfaces. The orientation of many structures entirely toward the sea-going life, such as lighthouses and dwellings built with the ubiquitous "widow's walk," is another key "element." Smaller details like boats, cars and other maritime paraphernalia, an abundance of barrels and boxes of all shapes and sizes, and plenty of seagulls will also show up in many photos, and should be duly noted on your pad. Be sure to consult as many sources as you have time for—*National Geographic* and the Time-Life series of books on America are especially good references—and avoid the temptation to model every single feature shown in one striking photo, since in doing so you're liable to tie yourself down and







Compare the modeling and prototype scenes shown at left and above. The prototype scene is at Mystic Seaport, Conn., and the clutter found along most seaports has been recreated here. Barrels, kettles, ropes and boxes all add to the intriguing qualities which make up the scene. The model scene includes a narrow gauge rail siding (standard gauge would do just as nicely, however) set into buildings carefully arranged to duplicate the atmosphere of a full size seaport and its skyline. Although harbors in various parts of North America have distinctive looks of their own, authors' modeling techniques are generally applicable to all of them.

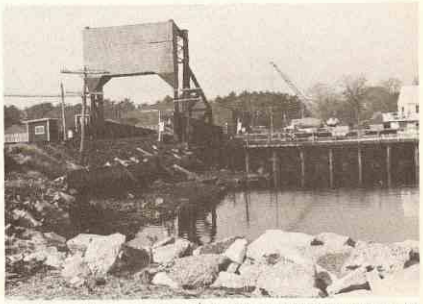
lose sight of the overall thematic feeling.

Dave Frary, in addition to living in a seacoast town for the better part of his life, performed just such detailed study prior to starting construction on his Thatcher's Inlet Railway, which we'll describe in three upcoming issues of RMC. The track plan is essentially a shelf-type switching pike built around the fishing village theme and aimed particularly at exploiting scenic possibilities, but it would provide the "focus" for either of the more involved pikes we've designed around it.

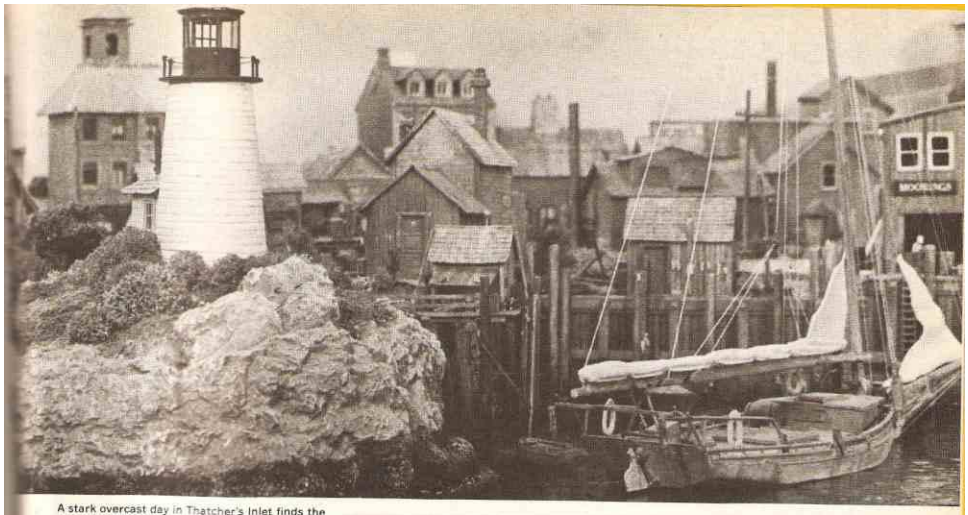
The first layout design, the Quahog Bay Railroad, is designed around the nucleus of Thatcher's Inlet for sectional and flex track components in HO 30" gauge (HOn2-1/2), which is actually N gauge track in HO scale (more on that somewhat later). Operation centers around the switching between the fish house, fertilizer plant, and dockside at the waterfront, and the short run (either point-to-point or out-and-back) up the line to Franklin City, a small inland county seat. Along the way there's a pulpwood chipping plant and related paper box factory for switching interest. We've conceived the scenic treatment of the layout as being divided into three separate distinctive "scenes," with minimal attempts to blend them together. First, naturally, comes the coastal hamlet, the one we've already spent so much time discussing, and then a brief transition to rough, deeply wooded countryside, where the mill and factory are, and finally a semi-complex looking end of the line yard with wye, passing, and storage tracks.

The larger pike is the Thatcher's Inlet Portage and Navigation Company, another 30" gauge design with a return loop on each end of the waterfront area. This pike is ideally suited for one-train continuous operation with a couple of track relays to throw the return loop switches, and this I count as a very desirable feature for running in locos or just standing back and watching a long drag rumble through the

The simple—yet complex—geometry of New England buildings is easy to model provided the modeler duplicates the several things that make the structures unique. Note all buildings face the water in Mystic recreation.

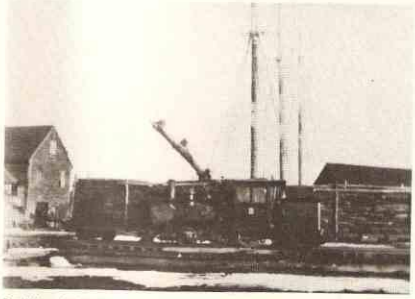


Note how roadbed is retained and talc rock prevents soil erosion in this scene along the B&M line at Manchester, Mass. This side of the drawbridge is the quiet tidewater, while open harbor water is to the left of bridge.

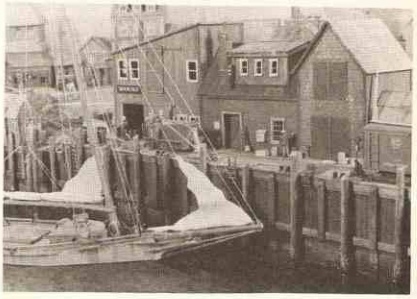


A stark overcast day in Thatcher's Inlet finds the fishing fleet moored, waiting for better weather. Almost all rail activities have ceased; they'll resume again when the next catch comes in. Compare this photo with the prototype shot at right. Although the lighthouse is not an exact model of the prototype shown, the atmosphere was captured—and this is the essence of successful modeling regardless of scale or subject matter.

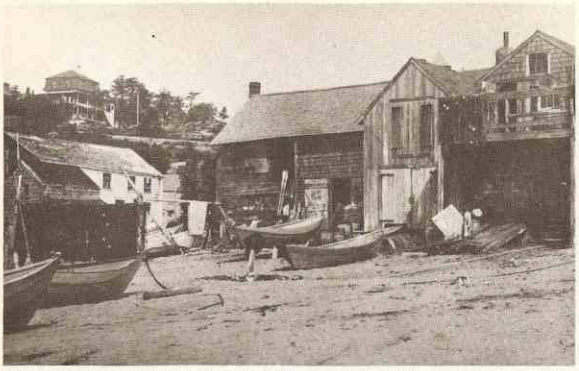
At right is the town of Mystic, Conn., as it prepares for yet another long, cold New England winter. Of special interest is the basic simplicity exhibited by the waterfront buildings.



Small two foot gauge engine contrasts against tall masts as WW&F no. 3 pauses only a few yards above the Atlantic Ocean and Sheepscot Bay with loads of lumber for three masted vessel moored behind. Date: circa 1910.

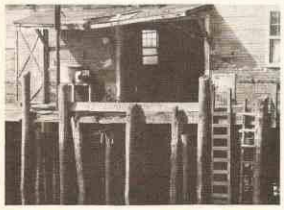


Thatcher's Inlet no. 3, a little gas loco, sputters along waterfront to pick up a boxcar spotted at Sam Cahoon's Fishhouse in this 1:87 version of a railroad serving a seaport. Scene is different, but atmosphere's there.



Although this photo of several fishing shacks in 1906 at Swampscott, Mass., seems far removed from railroading, it was the inspiration for the Thatcher's Inlet Railroad project. The goal was to recreate the mood of such a scene with the weathered texture of the structures, and the cluttered yet pleasing array of beach, boats and buildings, etc. Material like Campbell's shingles makes modeling easier.

Dock in Belfast, Me., was one of eye-catching elements authors wanted to capture for Thatcher's Inlet. Use drybrush for wood highlights.



This close-up photo of a wharf in Gloucester, Mass., shows many details which are easy to model by careful study of prototype's appearance.

Little hoist is one of many details authors found on camera "hunting expedition" to Rockport, Me. This type of detail "makes" a good layout.

Belfast waterfront exhibits usual clutter. Tug can be modeled using wood or plastic kits available in hobby shops. Lumber's for boat shoring.

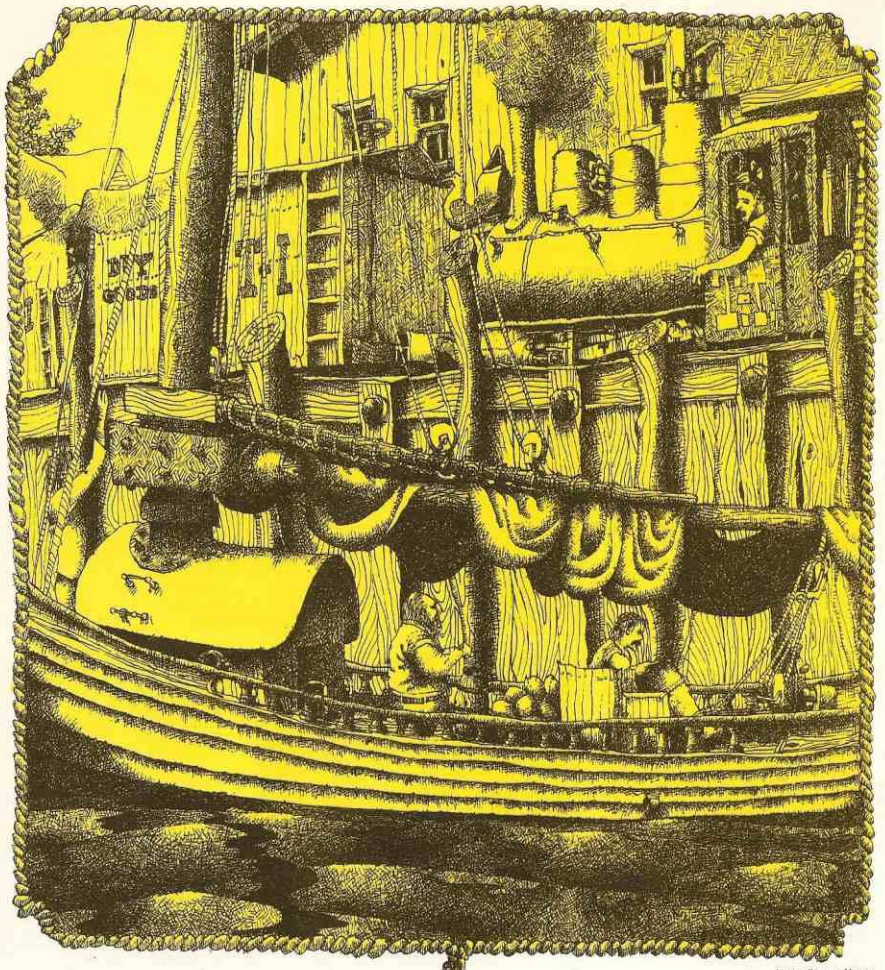
Early Sunday morning finds trawlers at berths with only compressors breaking silence. Note "verticals" set against low profiles of boats.

trackwork. The line runs from the major tidewater port at Steamboat Landing through the picturesque fishing village of Thatcher's, and on to the bluestone quarries at Getchell's. The standard gauge feeder—just a nine-inch length of track in the basic Thatcher's Inlet and the Quahog Bay—is expanded to serve the Steamboat Landing area, but the story goes that there just wasn't enough revenue coming out of Thatcher's to justify building passenger facilities there.

Either of these designs could easily be expanded into a slightly larger space in HOn3 or even standard gauge, and still lose none of the unique waterfront flavor. In any case, the research methods described are applicable to any sort of "specialty" modeling: copper-mining, certain operations based on agricultural produce, quarrying, or even something as wildly different as a cog railway. The trick is to step beyond the bounds of merely miniaturizing the nuts and bolts of life, and reach out for the nostalgia—the "feel"—of atmosphere-loaded scenes. Do this, and do it well, and it will be your photos instead of ours in *next* year's *Boomer Trail*.

Next month: getting started on the Thatcher's Inlet (shown in color on this month's centerspread). ☒

Two views of Rockport, Mass., show what's left of the former quarry operation and deep water docking area that served quarry (above), and a fisherman's shack (right) exhibiting signs of weather and salt spray. A railroad once served the quarry, hauling out stone for loading into ships; note talc pile at left in overall harbor photo. Fishermen have since taken over this docking area. Note large size of rocks used in walls.



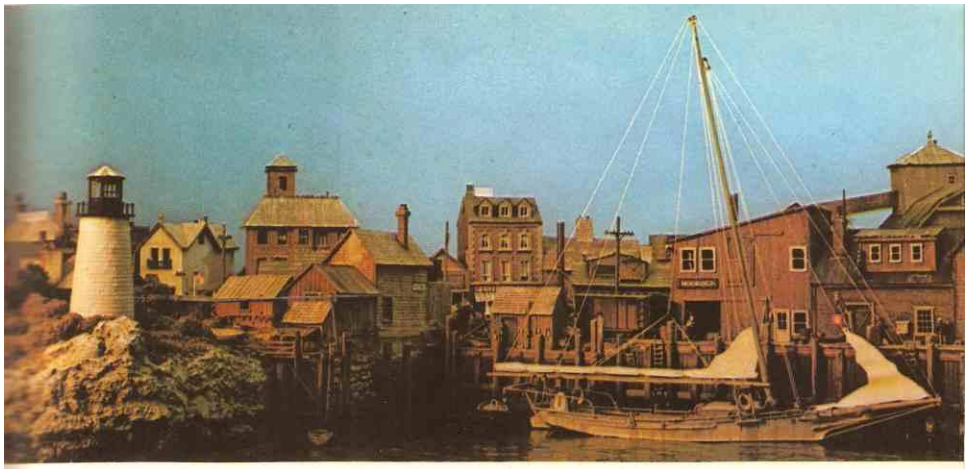
Art by Steven Myers

SUNRISE on Thatcher's

by Dave Frary and Bob Hayden

Part Two sets the stage for capturing the atmosphere of a sleepy little town served by ships from the sea and a narrow gauge railroad.

As the sun peeks a blazing red eye over the Eastern horizon and long, slanted rays flood the little fishing hamlet with crimson brilliance, there's already plenty of activity in Thatcher's Inlet. Half a dozen small fishing and lobster boats have already headed for the middleground, and several others are loading up with bait and gas in preparation for the long day's work. Over at Preston's Fishhouse on the very edge of the waterfront, young Francis Preston is washing out a fish box and a couple of pails that somebody forgot to empty yesterday, and—judging from the wry grimace on his face—he's none too pleased with the very smell that he's trying to get rid of. Just below the pilings where he's dumping the gurry, an angry, squawking gaggle of seagulls is noisily arguing over their seafood breakfast, while the vacationing guests at Sarah Buckley's "Seaman's Inn" still snore contentedly



Photos by Dave Frary

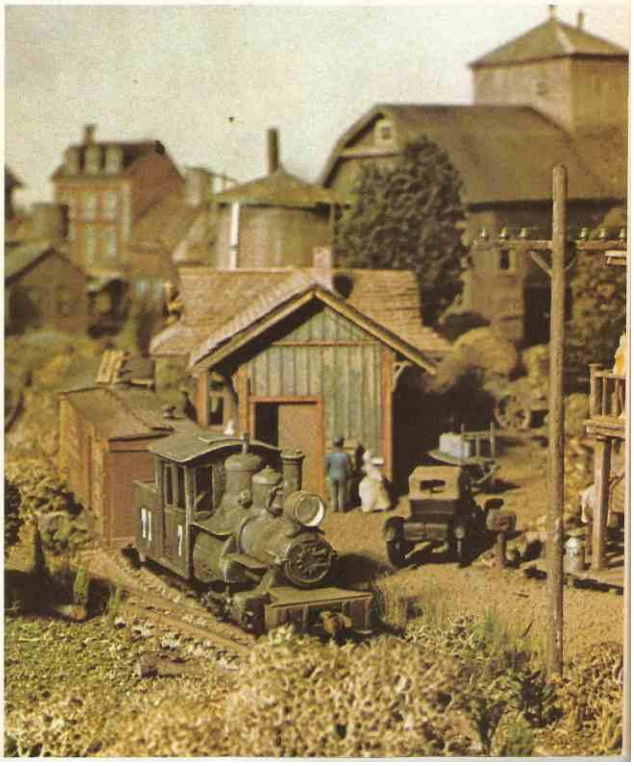
The photo above was taken as the morning sun skipped its rays across the ocean into Thatcher's Inlet just as the day's activities were about to begin. It is evident that the authors were successful in their attempt to capture the waterfront flavor. Hence, the importance of the railroad which serves the waterfront will be increased in the modeler's mind as he operates the layout's diminutive equipment (below).

amidst dreams of last night's seafood dinner.

At the north end of the waterfront there's quite another sort of activity, with entirely different sounds and smells. All three operating employees of the diminutive 30" gauge Thatcher's Inlet Railway are busily preparing for the day's chores, for today is Tuesday, the morning that the crew makes their slow once-a-week trip up the line to service the quarry sidings at Getchell's bluestone quarry. There's a flatcar load of lumber to go up the pike, along with two-thirds of a boxcar full of tools and half a dozen empty quarry cars. Right now fireman Jimmy Whitworth has just about gotten steam up in the little six-coupled job, while engineer Frank Bunting is busily oiling around and inspecting various and sundry parts of his favorite teakettle. The air around the little turntable pit is tinged with the unmistakable scent of hot lube oil, and the only sounds to be heard are the occasional panting of the five-spot's air compressor and the slow crunch of hobnail boots on cinder fill as engineer Bunting makes his way methodically 'round the engine.

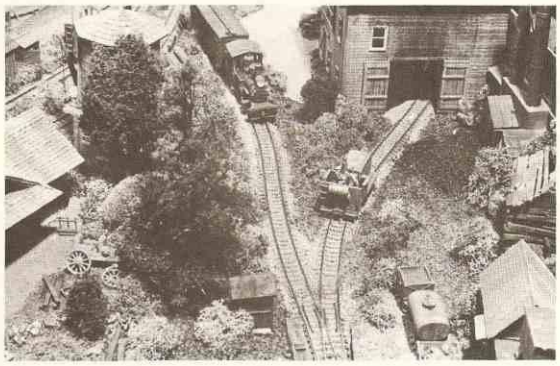
Inlet...

Conductor Howard Bemis, as usual, is fussing over his waybills, trying to figure a way to couple up his dinky consists to eliminate a few extra switching moves up the line and maybe make it home before the three o'clock whistle pops off at the fertilizer plant. Of course, everybody in the crew knows there isn't much chance of *that*, since Howard always forgets a car at the Inlet, or loses a bill, or tangles things



Thatcher's Inlet station stands nearly deserted in the early morning sunlight. A lone salesman and the station agent await mixed train to Franklin City (the county seat). This depot was built from Campbell's Skull Valley station (see review in "Test Track," September 1971 RMC, p. 42).

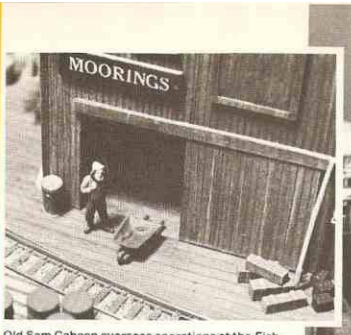
Wallace Brown's victorian house shines with its new coat of paint and pristine picket fence. This model is a Historical Scale Miniature's kit built without modifications. Although Mr. Brown is considered to be right neighborly, he's less than pleased with appearance of next door rooming house.



The fertilizer plant (above) is the second busiest place in the Inlet. It's said that there's no doubt about days when a good catch has been made: it's impossible to stand downwind of the plant for more than 30 seconds! Cahoon's Fishhouse (below) stands majestic against the repeated batterings of howling gales as No. 7 waits for her crew to return from lunch to resume the railroad's transportation duties.

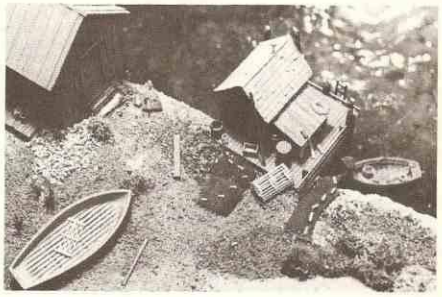
up so badly that they're usually lucky to make it home for supper!

The little settlement of Thatcher's Inlet was first established by English-speaking folks in 1713, after a splinter tribe of Piscataqua Indians decided the place was on the decline and sold the land, their ancient Indian fishing rights, and eight run-down compressed moose-flap hogans to a regrettably dim-witted group of Pilgrims who had been thrown out of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, for being unable to memorize the colony's liquor laws. The hogans quickly collapsed, but the settlement languished on until just after the Revolutionary War, when the town picked up a new name and a bit of notoriety through the exploits of one of its inhabitants, young Silas Thatcher. Silas, you'll all remember from American History classes, was the heroic lad who drove the wagon that hauled the supplies of brandy to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, thereby enabling George Washington's army to last out the winter. The hamlet was incorporated in 1786 and named "Thatcher's Inlet"—nobody knew what to call it before that—and has led a humdrum existence ever since.



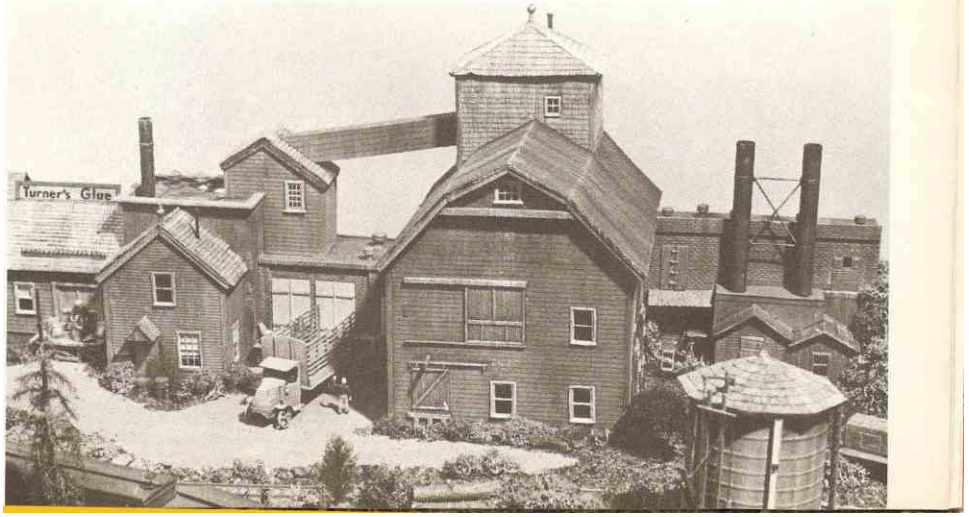
Old Sam Cahoon oversees operations at the Fishhouse. In a small community like Thatcher's, the industry is the center for all marine dealings, and Sam rents boats and gear, repairs them, stores them, outfits them . . . and lies about 'em, too. Preston's Fishhouse (right), first retail outlet in the Inlet, was also the first to have an ice machine and a lobster pound. The railroad depends heavily on even a small outfit like this.

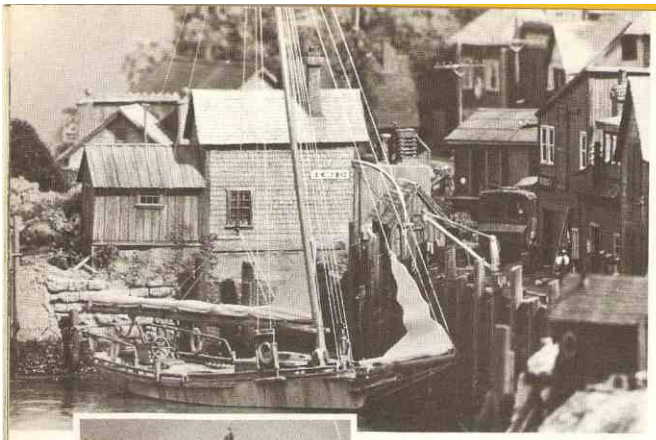
Just in back of Cahoon's Fishhouse (above) is a small boat building and repair yard owned by a newcomer, Raymond Geary (he has lived here only 13 years). The clutter evident here is considered to be neat housekeeping in Thatcher's.

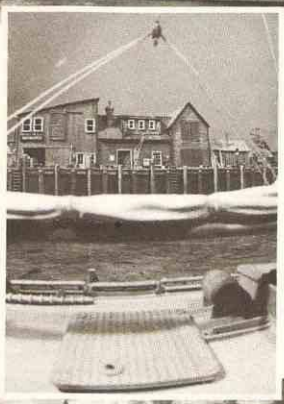


Horace Savage's boat house (above) started as a Timberline Boot Hill Cemetery House with an addition on one side. Note ropes, nets, boxes and lobster pots which give the area a busy look without any mechanical animation being needed.

Below: the major industry in the Inlet is Ellis Turner's fish-head glue and fertilizer plant. On a little sign near the front door is their motto: "Turner's Fertilizer—you can tell by the smell." It, too, is served by the little railroad.







The "Maude Preston" rides quietly at anchor at the end of the day's work. Up on the dock, the last load of fish is being moved out of the sun, and Sam Cahoon is cleaning the gurry from the wood planking near the railroad tracks. As explained in August 1971 RMC (page 42), the boat kit is a Pyro plastic model costing under two dollars.

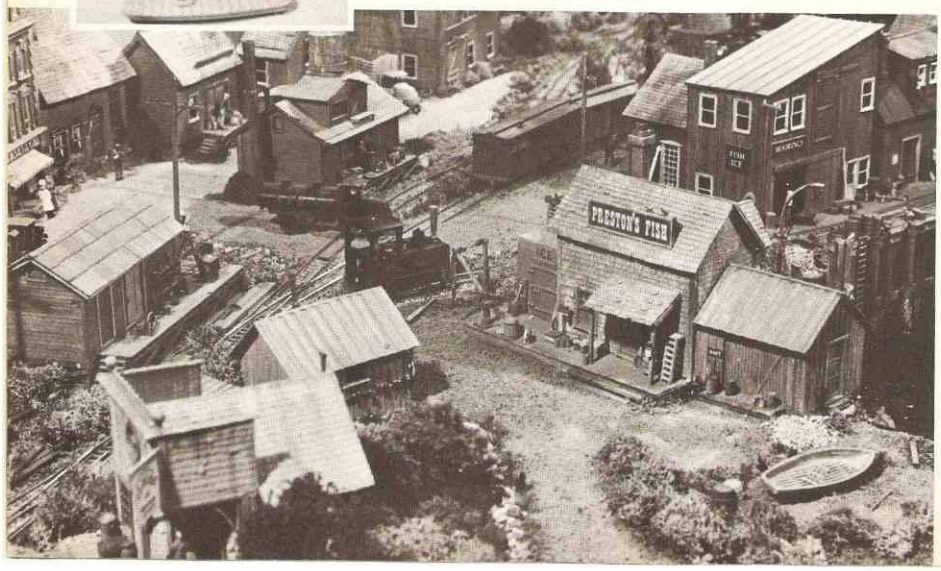
A recent visit to the Inlet by RMC staffers was marked by an unforgettable morning in the "Maude." This is the last photo the landlubbers took while departing the Inlet; a series of rough seas shortly converted our legs to soft rubber.

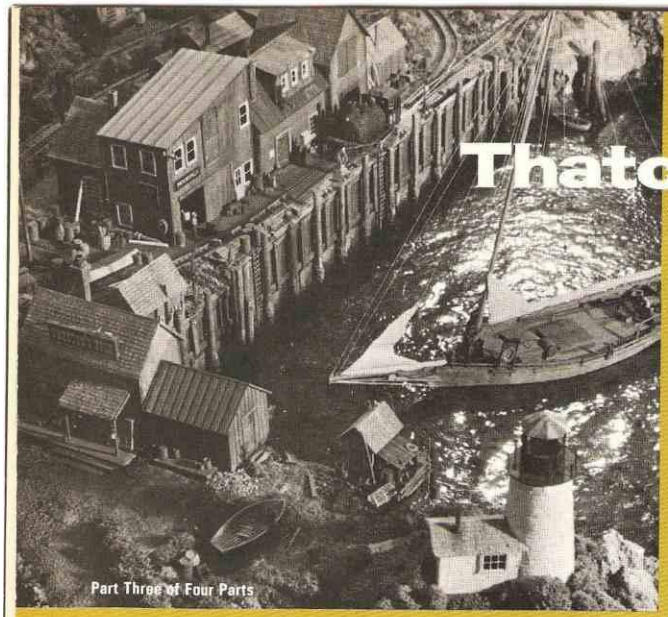
An overall view through the Inlet's "Business District" shows the many small buildings which were fitted into a tiny area without obvious—and unrealistic—crowding just for the sake of jamming in structures. Important: most buildings face the ocean as mentioned in Part One.

In 1893 the town experienced a brief flurry of railroad fever and speculation which resulted in the construction of the twelve-mile Thatcher's Inlet Railway, a corporation wholly owned by Eben Thatcher and his son-in-law, Ellis Brown. The narrow gauge road replaced a horse-drawn tramway that had served the bluestone quarries at Getchell's since the late 1870's, and in doing so split the hamlet into two Republican factions, Railroad and Non-railroad. At first, the tiny pike did pretty well, and Eben and Wallace became among the most substantial members of the "Railroad" crowd. Later on, though, with the advent of the automobile and a lull in the bluestone demand, the village tourist trade assumed ever greater importance, and now, in 1928, the little common-carrier is merely a part of the quaint local scene, hauling stone, fertilizer, and an occasional passenger or crate of hardware to and from the end of the line.

But to get back to this morning, things are starting to happen at Turner's fertilizer plant, just west of the main waterfront area. Ellie Turner's old dog Rufous has just chased a black and yellow butterfly nearly a quarter-mile down to the grade crossing at the north end, where the morning's very mixed train is clattering out of town. The rest of the fishing fleet has put to sea, and Thatcher's Inlet, in HO scale, is wide awake, everything bustling about loudly in a most purposeful fashion.

The Thatcher's Inlet Railway is a 30" gauge switching pike built over the past year by Dave Frary with an eye to capture the mood of waterfront activity and romance we wrote about in "Focus on Thatcher's Inlet" last month in RMC. Atmosphere, mood, and nostalgia there are aplenty, and next month we'll begin the description in detail of many of the techniques used to achieve the realism shown in the accompanying photos. ∞





Basics of Thatcher's Inlet

by Dave Frary and Bob Hayden

Part Three of Four Parts

After discussing the theme and mood of their HOn2-1/2 pike, the authors review basic construction techniques.

Two months back yonder we started off this series on the Thatcher's Inlet Railway by writing at preposterous lengths about the elusive task of modeling the "flavor" you invariably find lurking in every nook and cranny around a waterfront area, and suggested two track plans formulated with an eye toward capturing a measure of that sort of atmosphere. Last month we presented a words-and-pictures story about the nucleus around which the layouts were based: Dave Frary's Thatcher's Inlet switching pike. Hopefully the photos and the yarns spun around them indicated a degree of success in the attempt to model a scene just a tad wider in its appeal than the railroad "world" alone. This month we forge ahead with particulars—the nuts and bolts of construction—and a word or two about the simple scenic techniques that we feel put the TI just a jot or two above most of our earlier efforts.

Perhaps the best place to start is with a quotation from an old Thatcher's Inlet luminary, lobsterman Horace Savage. Back in 1913 Horace was the hit of the autumn season and earned himself quite a bit of notoriety to boot when he elected to ride out hurricane Hilda at sea. He woke up the morning after the storm only to find himself sitting in his 32' Novy-hulled boat right smack dab in the middle of Main Street, just a yard or two from the door to the firehouse. Folks used to pester Horace quite a bit to tell them how he'd performed such an amazing feat of navigation in the height of a raging storm with nothing but a compass that he'd purloined from his neighbor's boy's camping outfit; of course, he'd never admit that it was no feat at all, since he'd been asleep during the whole episode. Instead, when he couldn't put off the inquisitive souls any longer with his characteristic grunts, he'd always launch into the tale the same way: "Sit y'sself down," he'd wheeze, "and git y'sself comfortable, 'cause the wust part of this 'sere advenshore is the tellin' of it."

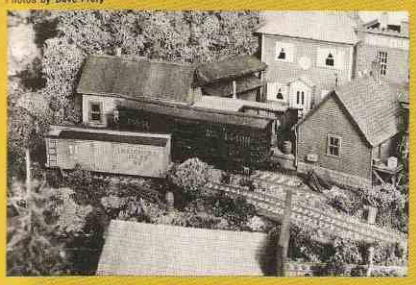
After a due amount of consideration, Thatcher's Inlet started life as an open grid platform, 3'x6'-6" in size, nailed and glued together from odds and ends of 1"x3" strapping stock. The overall dimensions were determined by the limitations of space over Dave's workbench and adjacent to another large diorama, "Desperation Mountain." The platform framework was built to rest on top of another identical frame mounted on the wall, and the platform base on which the layout is actually constructed is removable. This is an idea which bears some thought for those of you building a shelf-type around-the-walls pike, or a switching layout such as this one, as it allows the actual work area to be lifted off of the supporting framework and moved into a more convenient position for close-in work. When it's in place, Thatcher's Inlet is some 56" above floor level, a height that we find ideal for viewing; that also leaves the space underneath free for storage or, in this case, Dave's workbench. The removable feature means that should we get tired of TI, it can simply be lifted off its supporting shelf and stood in a corner, while another section takes its place.

We used plywood for trackboard on the little Elk River Railroad (April-August 1970 RMC), and wrote we were generally dissatisfied with it. For Thatcher's Inlet we decided to use Homasote, a pressed wallboard which offers the advantages of simplicity of cutting, drilling and nailing, and has excellent sound-deadening properties. We drew the track plan out full-size using actual pieces of track and some structures about the same size as those we expected to place on the pike, and then transferred the outlines of the roadbed to the Homasote. These sections were then cut out with a sabre saw and the appropriate pieces nailed and glued to the platform base; the joints between the sections were easily smoothed out with a coarse sanding block. You'll note that we don't subscribe to the "wood screw everlasting" school of bench-work building, which dictates everything be built to withstand the winds of a nor'easter, largely because we aren't athletic enough to want to jump up and down on the railroad, and nails and white glue have always worked for us in the past. Admittedly, benchwork revisions are easier if it is screwed together.

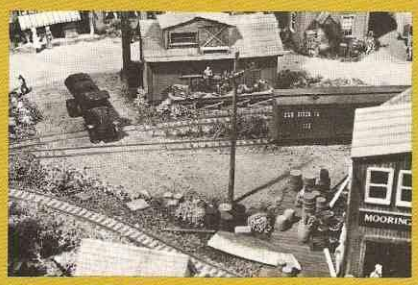
All the trackwork was laid down directly on the Homasote with small brads pushed through the holes that come pre-cast in the plastic ties, and a few extra holes were drilled through with a Dremel tool in cases where we had to shorten one of the pre-made sections to make them fit in. We used N scale flexible track and Atlas remote control switches (turnouts) throughout, since we felt the irregular appearance of hand-laid trackage wasn't really needed due to the large proportion of ties that would eventually be covered over by pier boards, roadway, and cinder ballast. Once we had the trackwork in and operating satisfactorily, we used the airbrush to paint rails, ties, joiners, and all related details a muddy gray-brown, and then hand-brushed foreground rail sides with Floquil's "Rust" and cleaned rail tops and inner flangeways with a pencil-type typewriter eraser. The effect of painted, heavily ballasted commercial trackwork is just a wee bit below the quality of hand-laid rail on individual ties, and we felt that the saving in time allowed more concentration on scenic work and additional attention to detail, thereby improving the pike as a whole.

Wiring is one of our old bugaboos and, to our great surprise and relief, consisted only of running two wires to a terminal section in the hidden trackage behind the buildings. Due to the ingenious construc-

Photos by Dave Frary



Visual comparison of a standard gauge boxcar and a typical Thatcher's Inlet dinky 28-footer illustrates advantage of narrow gauge when it came to saving money on initial construction costs of trackage and equipment.



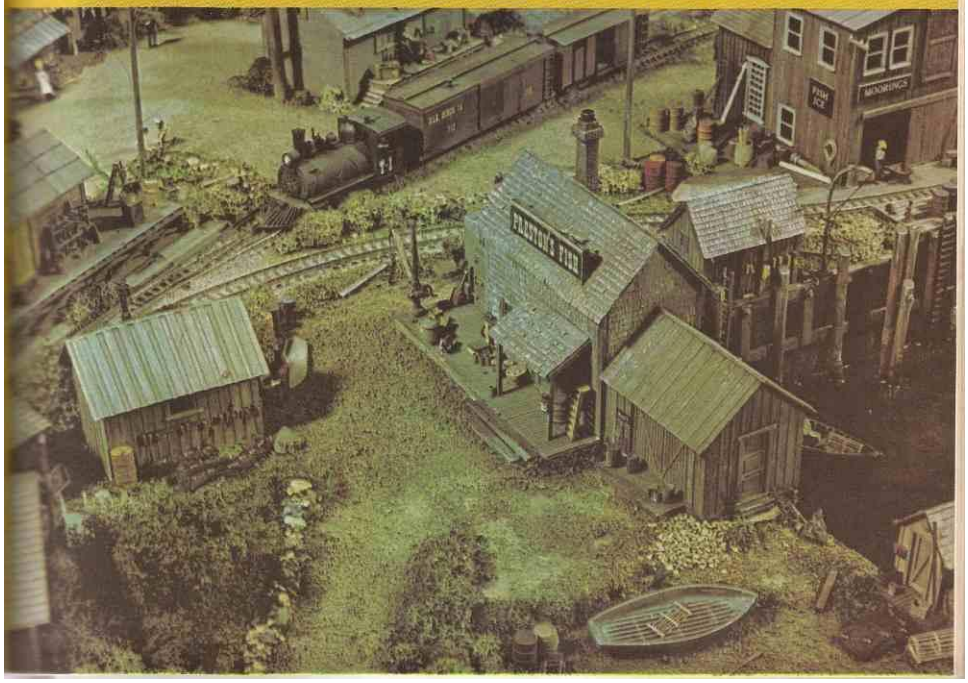
A novel feature of TI construction was establishment of several "live sawdust" areas. Texturing materials and structure were not glued down to enable fast interchanging of structures to add variety to the village.

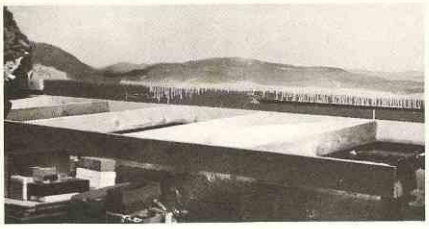
tion of the plastic turnouts with bus bars molded into the ties providing for proper two-rail wiring, we found we had electrical continuity everywhere on the layout, without any polarity mismatches. The innards of a simple train-set power pack were built right into the platform framework and hidden under some scenery, but this crude arrangement has since been replaced by a Power Systems transistor throttle, which makes the little four-coupled mechanisms hum and operate in a much more realistic manner. Wiring tasks were completed by lashing up the switch machines on the Atlas turnouts to a panel on the end of the pike made up of their simple add-on type controllers, another boon to electrical fumble-fingered types like us.

With the trackwork in, painted, and wired into working order, Dave started on some rough scenery contouring. We wanted to try something new—to us at least— so he laid in slabs of scrap plastic foam (this handy stuff is available from florists, some hobby shops or arts and crafts supply houses) and then heat-formed them with a propane torch into the more "level" areas between Main Street and the wharf. The torch technique is easy but takes a bit of getting used to, the trick being to avoid playing the flame too long in any one spot. With a little practice you'll find it's simple to "melt" the foam to the contours you want. Caution is always warranted around an open flame.

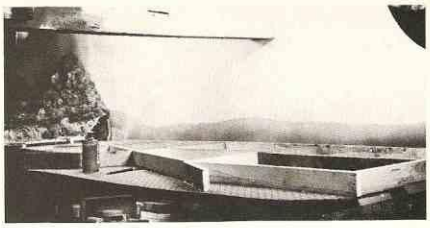
After the "flat" areas (no areas are truly

Subdued color found on all areas of the Thatcher's Inlet HOn2-1/2 model railroad is highlighted with a touch of bright hues here and there. All structures are weathered to establish a uniform appearance for realism, with careful observations of actual prototype scenes used as guidelines.

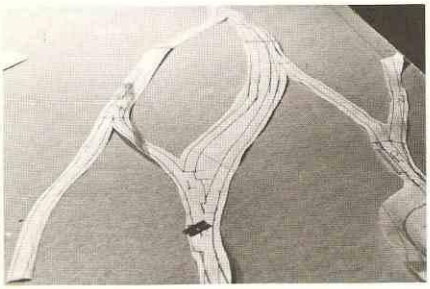




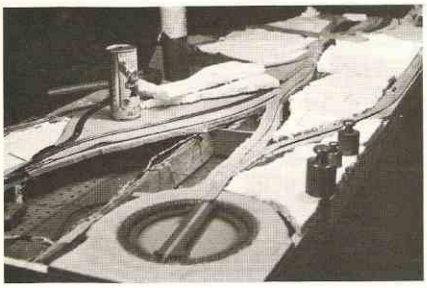
Thatcher's Inlet is built on a frame of 1x3's which sits on top of this frame shelf—an identical platform which allows the layout itself to be moved to a more convenient area for detailing work or photography. The background is robin's egg blue interior latex paint applied over linoleum, with hills and distant mountains added in green and violet oils.



This photograph shows the actual framework of 1x3 strapping. The masonite in the foreground provided the base for the "water" area of scene (this topic will be covered in detail in next month's concluding article in the Thatcher's Inlet series). Scenery shown at far left was built during a raging Northeast blizzard that kept everyone indoors for several days.



Some of the trackwork was in position (left) by the time this view was photographed. Above photo shows how authors planned trackwork: a sheet of shelf paper was rolled out, and sections of N scale track were positioned on it. Their outline was then traced onto the paper and cut-out trackwork outline was used as a guide for cutting Homasote trackboard material.

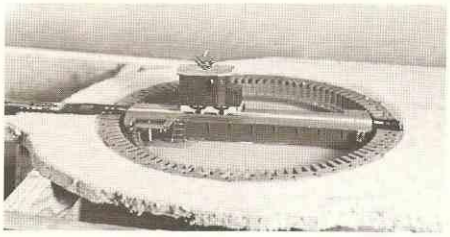


As an experiment, pieces of expanded foam were used to form more level areas of TI scenery. Several chunks are shown in these two photos with weights added to hold down foam while glue dried. Foam can then be shaped with a propane torch to get the desired dips and humps. Photo at left shows masking tape used to cover rails before plaster was applied.

flat, just relatively so, with plenty of dips and humps to make them look bigger because your eye can't take 'em all in so easily as a plane) were filled in in this manner, the higher ground was roughed in with cardboard formers and strips, and hand-sized pieces of paper towels dipped in soupy plaster laid on as a "skin". Another thin coat of plaster brushed on over this and the foam areas completed the scenic base, and we then turned to the preparation of finished surfaces to which structures, details, and the various texturing and vegetation materials are added.

Our first step in developing the finished scenery—the surfaces that you look at—was casting the rock faces. For these we used the latex mold technique that we've described before in these pages. Briefly, this involves first making a rubber mold (the rubber is available at hobby shops or crafts stores, and you can also use the latex used for rug binding) by applying several thin coats of latex and a layer of surgical gauze for strength to a chunk of rock or coal that has finely etched detail faces. Once cured, the mold is peeled off the rock, filled with a soupy plaster mixture, and slapped into place on the scenery base. Since we were after the rugged rocks along the New England coast, we made our molds from a rough-looking chunk of quartz dug out of the woods near Dave's place, and made several molds so we could work one while the others were setting up. Once the plaster has set—still damp, but hardened sufficiently to maintain its form—the mold can be removed and the faces painted with a thin wash of oils, water colors, or Floquil's Polly-S. The trick here is to apply the preliminary washes while the rock casts are still damp, which prevents the paint from sinking into the plaster and moderates the intensity of the colors. We initially applied a wash of very thinned-out black, which emphasizes the "cracks" between the rocks, and followed this up with gray-blues and a touch of brown to simulate the granites and basalts of the Maine coast. Dave then spot-lit the rock casts strongly from almost directly overhead and painted in the darker shadows with a blue-black tone to again exaggerate the ruggedness of the rocks and improve their appearance in photos and under weak house lighting. Rock highlights—where light is reflected—were emphasized by dry-brushing with off-white, and then dyed sawdust, commercial ballast and loose crushed plaster "rocks" were glued into place using thinned-out white glue.

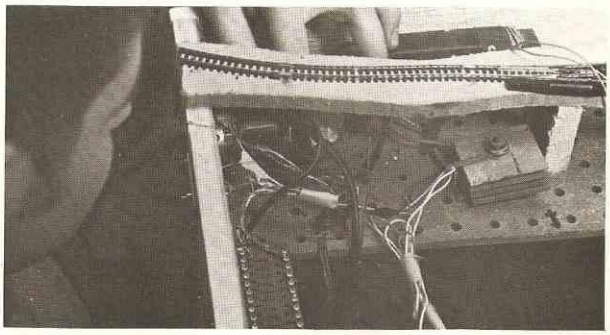
An alternative to plaster which shows considerable merit is the "Mountains in



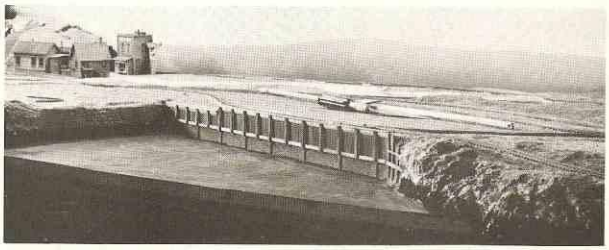
TI's turntable utilizes the fine Rapido N scale model. It was positioned in place and surrounded by a square of Homasote trackboard. Authors found only a few superficial changes were needed to give it an HO 30" gauge appearance, and operation has been faultless to date. Compare this view of turntable area with color photo shown on page 39 of February issue.

Bob Hayden is shown struggling with one of the mundane details of trackwork and wiring—getting the layout to operate, in short. All Homasote trackboard is in place, as is the bulk of the track itself with the exception of the turntable. Gaping open areas were filled in with plastic foam as detailed in the text, greatly adding to portability of layout.

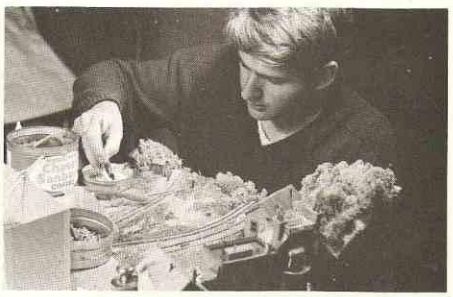
Wiring on the Thatcher's Inlet was simple: one set of track connections, and the whole thing seemed to work as if by magic. Shown here are the wires leading to the turnout (switch) control panel from several remote-control N gauge turnouts. Most modelers would isolate at least one siding with insulated gaps to permit independent control of two locomotives. This adds only one more toggle or selector switch per block (isolated section), and a couple of wire leads.



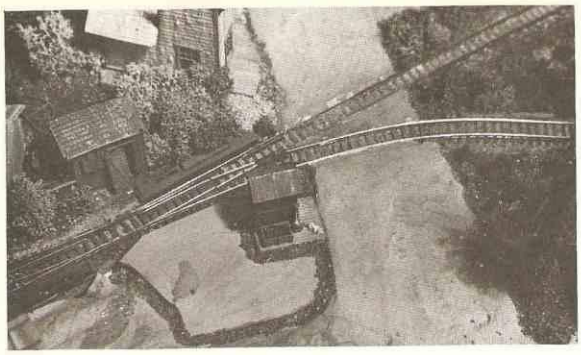
With all of the rough scenic base installed and the bulk of the finished textured areas completed, the authors started positioning structures on TI. This view shows several of the "Main Street" buildings in place, as well as the wharf (which will be detailed in the May issue) completed. Water had yet to be simulated at this point.

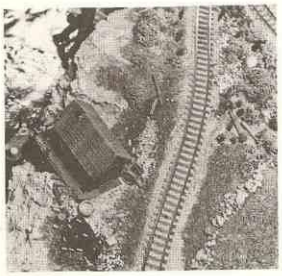


Several structures in a still-incomplete form were positioned to check the visual effect they would have on waterfront scene. Paper mockups of some structures were made to insure compatibility of skyline components. Cahoon's fishhouse, center, was built using photos of many similar structures, but generally follows lines of building in Woods Hole, Mass.



One of the keys to realism on a small pike is haphazard and thick placement of many weeds and scrub brush in uncared-for areas near the railroad grade. Bob Hayden is shown gluing a few of the numerous weeds in place, a simple but time-consuming task involving a drill, tweezers, Ambroid white glue and one avid modeler. Lichen was used extensively.





Beals Avenue crosses the TI right-of-way on its way to Main Street. The crossing is shown before boards were installed between rails. Road areas were made from thickened latex wall paint to which scale ballast was added, then painted with Floquil's "Mud" paint after the mix had dried.

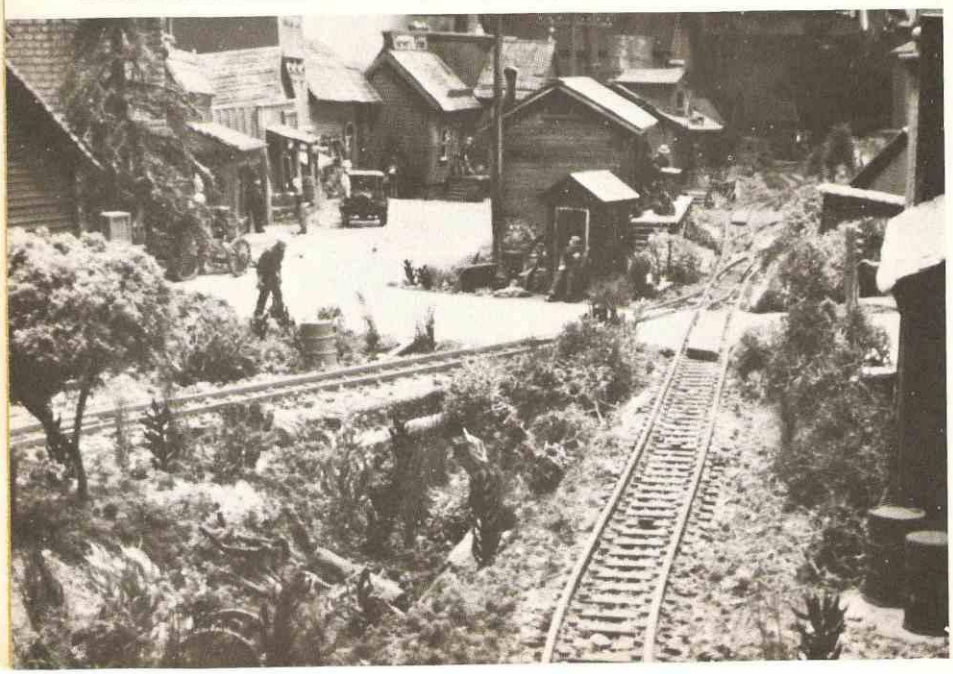
The authors used N scale flexible track with plastic ties to avoid time requirements of hand laid track. Realism lost is small, as the ties were almost buried in dark gray ballast, or covered with road crossing, earth or boards. Goal was to simulate a generally shoddy right-of-way.

View below was taken with an f240 pinhole aperture in an old Brownie Autograph camera. Scene aptly depicts the small town flavor Thatcher's Inlet was designed to capture. Note narrow, weedy trackage, profusion of small details, and—above all—compact atmosphere that pervades scene.

Minutes" foam material show in color on page 54 of the February 1972 RMC.

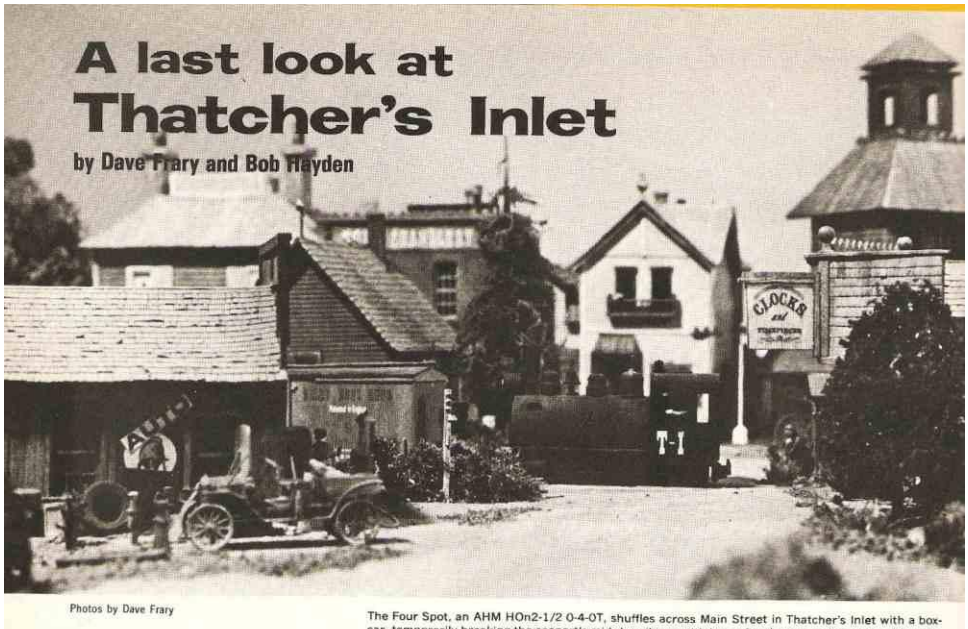
As an experiment, we designated several areas of the railroad as "live sawdust" locations. These areas—usually about the size of a structure and in no case bigger than 3-1/4"x4"—are set aside so that the structures and detail on them can occasionally be changed so as to provide a fresh look to the town. The spots are generally level, with the ground area painted an earth color. By leaving the texturing materials loose we can easily replace one building with another. Among the "live" locations on the pike are the spot between the gas station and the front edge of the layout, the area behind Cahoon's waterfront fish weighing station and warehouse (occupied in most of our photos by a couple of small railroad maintenance-of-way shacks), and the patch of ground underneath the rooming house.

At this point we began to do some deep thinking about the structures we needed on the Thatcher's Inlet, since characteristic buildings are one of the things we settled on as being crucial in establishing the waterfront "mood" we discussed in part one of this series (see February 1972 RMC—"Focus on Thatcher's Inlet"). Next month we'll detail what we think is a fresh approach to planning the relative sizes, importance, and placement of structures in an atmosphere scene of this type, sketch out some of the details of kitbashing and scratchbuilding several of the key buildings, discuss how to achieve realistic—but dry—"water," and finish up with more Thatcher's Inlet lore, including the real truth about Odie Strunk's status over at Turner's Glue Factory.



A last look at Thatcher's Inlet

by Dave Frary and Bob Hayden



Photos by Dave Frary

The Four Spot, an AHM HOn2-1/2 0-4-0T, shuffles across Main Street in Thatcher's Inlet with a box-car, temporarily breaking the seaport's mid-day silence with her soft exhausts and clanking side rods.

Our narrow gauge nexus wraps up with notes on "making water," structure modeling theory and techniques, some rolling stock conversion tips—and the expose of a village rumor.

Once we'd wallowed through the Herculean tasks of making dry land for the little hamlet of Thatcher's Inlet out of soupy plaster and torn-up paper towels, we turned to the design and placement of structures in and around the town. We knew we had a tall order here—to include as many of the architecturally "typical" features that we talked about in part one of the series, and at the same time to capture the elusive "feel" of a fishing village by arranging buildings for best over-all effect. Building the sharply-pitched New England roofs, the twelve-pane double hung windows, and the seedy look of run-down lobster shacks was something we'd done before, but achieving the overall visual effect of *groups* of buildings required a bit of thought and some planning before we could proceed with the job. As usual,

Abner Beals (on the left, there) saved the day when a big cat escaped from a visiting circus by running over the petrified animal with his Model T. Abner was on his way home from the town's annual clam-bake and was noted to be slightly petrified himself after consuming his own volume in draft beer.

Thatcher's Inlet's high-drivered (well, for 30" gauge those are pretty tall drivers, anyway) #7 rolls downhill and is about to clatter over the

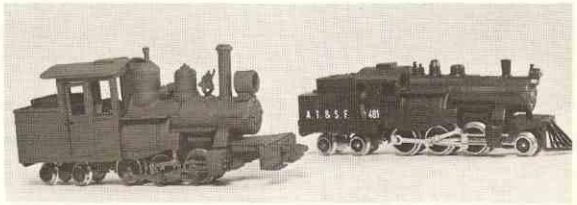
once we did a little head-scratching, the solution turned out to be easier than the telling of how we arrived at it.

The two really critical areas of the railroad as far as atmosphere was concerned were the "Main Street" scene and the dockside fish warehouse complex, so these received a lot of attention. Since we were groping for the best gross effect of an entire *block* or mass of structures taken as a visual whole, we started out by making up a dozen shirt-cardboard mockups of various buildings that we'd singled out in our research as "reeking" of the seacoast scene. These full-size HO forms allowed us quite a bit of freedom in experimenting with the general locations, relationships of forms, roof angles and pitches of various "possible" structures and arrangements. Finally we settled on building designs and locations that we knew ahead of time we could live with. With this technique we found we were also much less likely to come up with a "monster," a finished structure that just won't seem to "fit" on the layout after we've gone to all the work of building it.

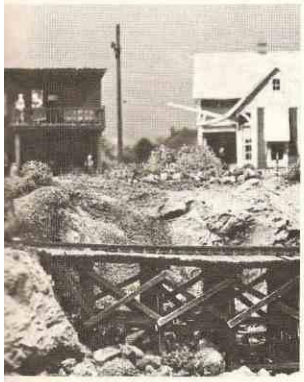
The structures themselves came from all possible sources—straight kits (Campbell's Clock Shop), cross-kitted (the municipal building, the fish market and the water tank, among others), and several scratch-built jobs. A really major aspect of our structure doctrine is that we try to do as much kitbashing as possible, especially modifications of inexpensive, well-detailed styrene structures, and reserve scratch-building only for those models which are at the focal points of interest, where nothing but "scratch" will do.

At various stages in construction, all structures were lifted off the workbench and test-fitted in a variety of positions in the scene. This helped to keep our sense of proportion, and influenced final structure placement at least as much as the cardboard mock-up trick. This is a bit like "musical" buildings, but it highlights the point: when we're looking for flimsy things like "feeling" in modeling, the only way to come up with something satisfying that we've

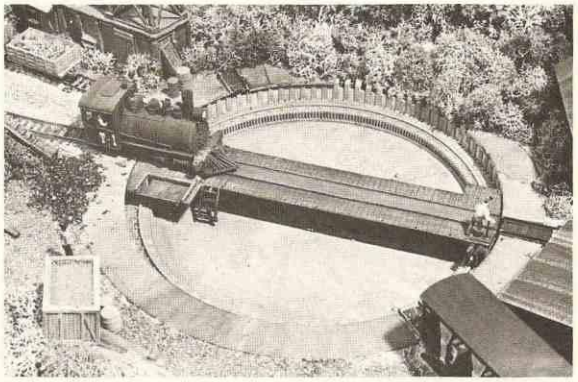
The above photo was set up to show altered and weathered Thatcher's Inlet rolling stock alongside some fine Austrian prototype HOn2-1/2 equipment right out of the box. TI shop crews plan to convert the tank engine for local service as the Five Spot is showing signs of wear, and those open-end passenger coaches are slated for service as the buggy on the run up to Getchell's (see map in February).



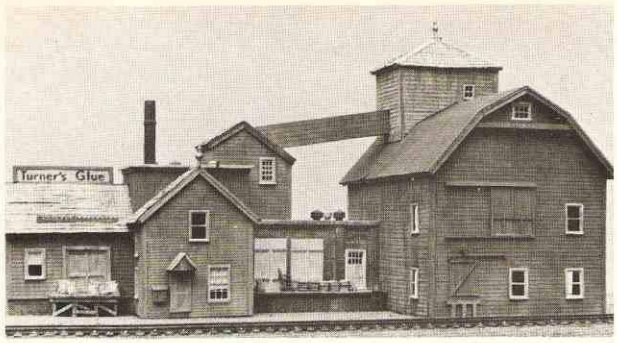
TI's little six-coupled number 7 started life as an N scale AHM Pennsy Q-lb. The HO 30" gauge version is strictly freelanced, but is rather characteristic of the narrow gauge Forney types found on many rosters. Bob Hayden started the conversion by cutting away portions of the N scale superstructure and adding new domes and stack, while Dave Frary finished up with a plastic cab and parts.



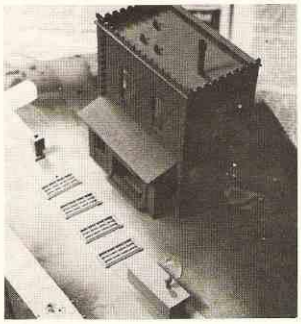
trestle enroute to Frenchman's Cove in a scene reminiscent of the waterfront operations on the long gone Wiscasset, Waterville & Farmington.

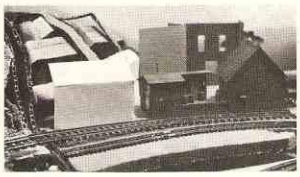


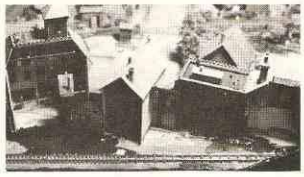
As emphasis was on water-related aspects of the scene, strictly railroad facilities were played down somewhat and kept to a minimum in order to avoid dividing the major focus of interest. Important rail facilities were not overlooked, however, such as this turntable, a modified Rapido N scale model.



Freal's Fish Eye Fertilizer and Turner's Glue Factory complex is a hodge-podge of kit parts including a section of Fine Scale's flour and grain mill (left), a front from Model Hobbies company house capped by a scratched brick section, a styrene brick section from a Vollmer old fashioned workshop, and a front wall from another Fine Scale kit . . . plus odds 'n ends and scratchbuilt sides, roof and cupola.







Four photos show (left) parts for Ship's Chandlery kitbashed from AHM Ramsey Journal Building; (above) Preston's Fishhouse converted from Campbell Sheriff's Office kit; (below left) rough cardstock forms to help authors visualize effects of various roof angles, building heights, etc., without actually building structures first in hopes they'll look right when placed together in a scene; and (below) application of "if it doesn't show, forget it" rule on Main Street buildings.

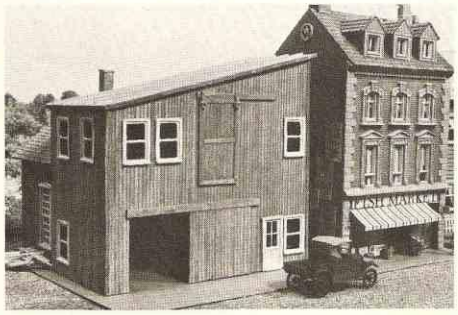
found is a trial-and-error process in which we try to be as open-minded as possible. The result of all this scratching around and finagling—hopefully—is a final arrangement in which each building looks "in place," custom-fitted to the plot of ground it occupies and blending into the scene around it.

Dave finally reached the zenith of kitbashing when he churned out the heterogeneous complex of buildings known as Turner's Glue Factory and Freal's Fish Eye Fertilizer Plant. The list of kits and parts of kits used to crazy-quilt this rambling structure together reads like a hobby-shop inventory: included are parts from a Model Hobbies company house, a Fine Scale flour and grain mill, a Vollmer old-fashioned workshop, AHM Rico station, and such goodies as Campbell Profile shingles, Holgate-Reynolds brick sheeting, Timberline window castings, and finally a Selley cast door. The idea is, though, that we did get what we were after in this case: a jigsaw puzzle type of building that was obviously added to and added to over the years.

Once the major buildings were in place, we started adding weeds, rocks, stumps, logs, old boards and a host of other bits of detail to the town and along the right-of-way. This is time-consuming work, but helps to blend everything together and add to that "fit" we talked about before.

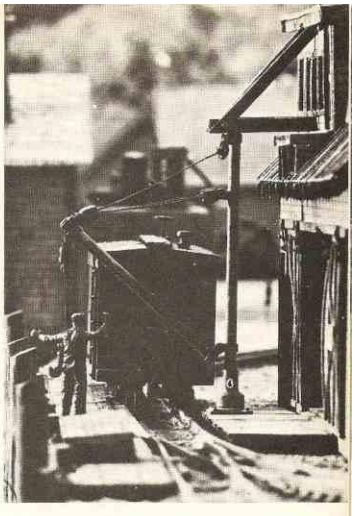
The water area posed a special challenge, since we wanted to get away from the laborious technique of applying coat-after-coat of spar varnish over a painted plaster base that we'd used in the past. We decided to try a clear plastic casting resin, the type used for making "crystal" paperweights with things visible inside, preserving objects, and so on. The area was prepared by making the seawall out of a sheet of scribed stock with roughed-up dowels for pilings. Nut-and-bolt castings were added liberally around the heavy wooden beams. This done, the seawall was weathered rather heavily with brown washes and white dry-brush (those seagulls again!), and barnacles were added by applying Ambroid white glue up to a straight "waterline" level, and then pressing on a fine grained white ballast material. The base for the water area itself was a sheet of 1/2" Homasote, the same stuff we used for track board, with a thin layer

Two views of shed-like Cahoon's Fishhouse (below left and right) show most features of structure. Note that left photo shows it alongside Virgil Doubleday's fish market, although it was later moved closer to the docks.

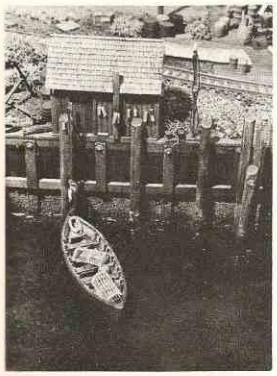


Note steeply pitched roofs on both structures and dormer windows on fish market, both strong seacoast features. Variety of window casing styles in Cahoon structure indicates parts of building were added on over years.

Waterfront area is a rather simply constructed area of the pike as shown above. The seawall is carved out of modeling plaster and then painted with Polly-S water based paints. Sheets of scribed wood form base for wharf's construction. "Water" is last detail to be added to scene.

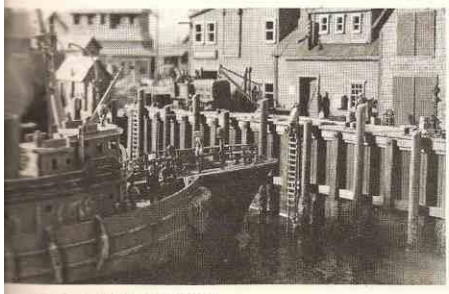


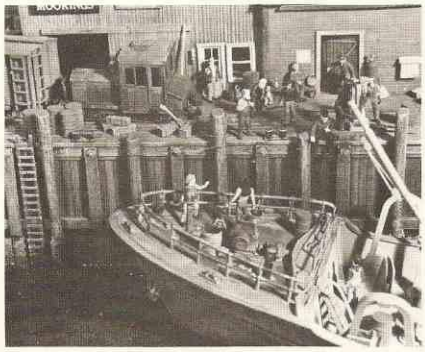
Tight clearances along waterfront (right) often require home-grown diplomacy between railroad crews and fishhouse employees to keep traffic moving. An extra move around passing track behind fishhouse enabled crew to pick up this loaded boxcar blocked by wharf unloading.

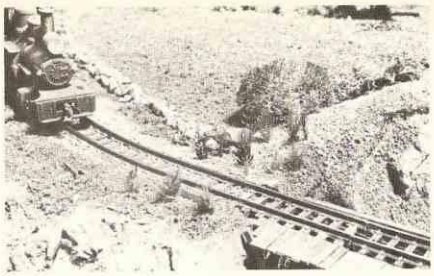


These three photos show various details where land meets the sea at Thatcher's Inlet. Fishing shack of Jerome McKue (right) was part of Timberline's Boot Hill cemetery kit; Horace Savage's (above) was a Revell styrene chicken house; and Farley Gruen's (left) was appropriately enough an outhouse in Campbell's Skull Valley depot kit. Keys to realism in all three models are the same: spindly supporting framework which looks like it was built in place (it was), and myriad of small details like lobster pots and buoys.

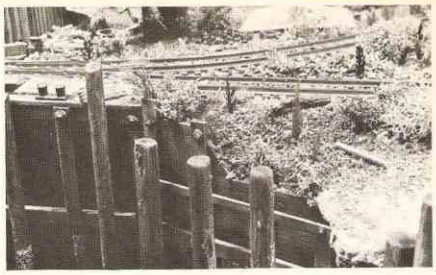
Much of Thatcher's mood is captured through careful execution of the waterfront area with the strong verticals and horizontals of the wharf and nearby structures contrasting against the graceful lines of the ships. Tug is shown maneuvering the "Frenchman's Pride" up to wharf, a tricky job.





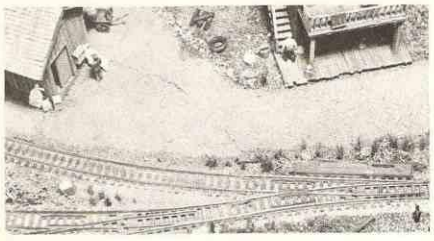


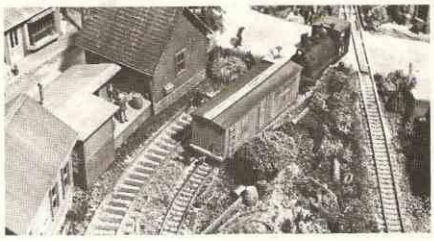
These two photos show the effectiveness of using N scale flexible track and turnouts when the trackage is carefully worked into the surrounding landscape areas. Note abundant scraps of wood and other trash scattered around, plus the New England style stone wall along the right-of-way near the locomotive (above left). The wood pilings along the wharf were carefully roughed up and weathered to show effects of weather and sea.



Looking down into the north end of Main Street near the depot and Neverly sisters' rooming house shows how little switch machines actually detract from the scene when they are painted to match scenery. Roadway was made by mixing Campbell's cinder ballast with thickened latex paint.

The standard gauge interchange with the diminutive 30" gauge Thatcher's Inlet equipment serves the double purpose of providing an outlet for Inlet wares and a visual comparison for visitors to view as the merits of narrow gauge railroading are explained to them. HO flexible track was used here.

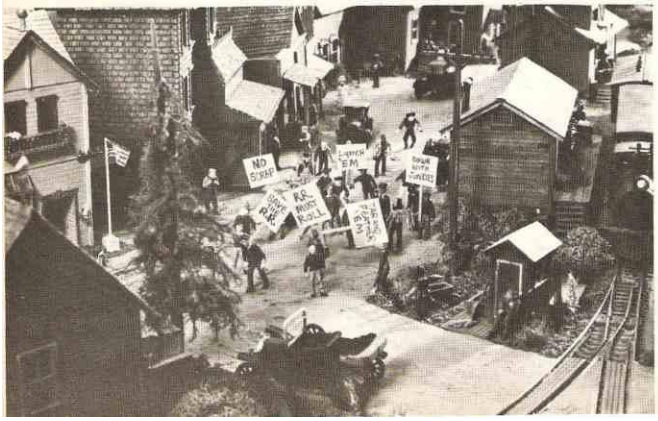




of Savogran Wood Putty poured over it to provide a flat, smooth and level surface. After the wood putty was rock hard, it was painted, taking care to make it light at the shallow points near the rocks, and darker under the wharf and in the channel. The first layer of liquid casting resin was mixed rather thin (it's the two part kind, a resin with a catalyst hardener, and you can usually find it* by making a few phone calls to plastics supply houses; also, some hobby shops and almost all craft shops carry it), poured in, and allowed to set up; then a second, thicker layer was added over it. We added a blue coloring agent to the third layer, and used quite a bit of the hardening agent, which made the stuff set up rather quickly, with a good semblance of ripple texture. The overall result is an excellent water effect with a minimum of fussy work, a surface which is easy to take care of (just dust, like furniture) and realistic both live and in photos.

*One supplier is Natcol, Box 299, Redlands, CA 92373.

Our Thatcher's series ends, but life goes on in the inlet as residents fight for the status quo. A recent crisis: resisting big city scrap dealers of Fiddletown & Copperopolis fame who tried to junk the line.



And now, to clear up a mystery which we hinted at last month in part three, a sort of skeleton in the hamlet's dusty attic, so to speak: Rumor has long had it that Odie Strunk, who's been the hired man over at Turner's Glue for as long as it's been standing there ("Never wanted to do anythin' else," he always says) and who's not renowned for either his reasoning powers or his ambition, was swapped in the in the cradle for Wallace Brown (operator of Brown's Boat Yard) when both were just a few hours old back in 1871. The tale, which always seems to come out of the cobwebs after midnight and usually after copious overdoses of Lydia Pinkham's Herb Medicine, goes further to add that Grandmother Turner switched Odie for Wallace, or Wallace for Odie, when she noted that one of the lads had a bit more lusty a howl than the other. In any case, the truth came to light just recently when Grandmother Turner's diary passed into the hands of the town's historical society, and a close reading revealed that while she had switched babies at least twice, she had so many second thoughts about the deed that she changed them right back again, making Wallace Wallace, and Odie Odie, if you see the point.

Good luck in modeling a waterfront—or any atmosphere-filled special scene—on your pike. The challenge of creating a mood as well as a miniature makes this sort of operation probably the most interesting job we've undertaken in fifteen years in the hobby. If you give it a try, we feel you'll come up with results that you'll be most pleased with.