

THE BRASS POUNDER



Newsletter of the Carolina Southern Division 12, Mid-Eastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association

Volume 20 Number 3

March 2020

Superintendent's Corner

By Alan Hardee

Division Coming Events

(See [CSD Website](#) for
further details)

Wade's Train Town
Open House
Saturday March 14th
10:00am – 2:00pm
Brookford Community
Bldg
1700 S Center St.
Hickory, NC

DIVISION MEETING (EVENT)

ROAD TRIP

Greensboro Train Show

Saturday March 21st
9:00am – 4:00pm
Lewis Recreation
Center
3110 Forest Lawn Dr.
Greensboro, NC
27455

For possible carpool
arrangements, email
[Superintendent Alan
Hardee](#)

I know this is a few days late, but I've been having some fun. I just returned from a great train show at the Western NC Agriculture Center in Fletcher, NC. My local club, Metrolina Model Railroaders once again displayed the layout for everyone's enjoyment. While at the show, I did a little networking with the South Eastern Region. I'm happy to say that most of those folks are planning to visit our Carolina Special – MER Convention in October. As a side note, the SER convention in 2021 will be in Greenville, SC.

A big thanks to Joe Skorch for hosting the February division meeting and operating session on his great Southern Pacific layout. March meeting was discussed and decided that it will be a traveling event to the Greensboro Train Show hosted by Carolina Model Railroaders. The show is 9-4 on March 21st at Lewis Recreation Center, 3110 Forest Lawn Dr. in Greensboro. We can get together for carpools if needed. I hope to see you at the show.



CSD Members gab and eat a pizza lunch before the operating session at Joe Skorch's Southern Pacific layout during our February meeting.

Photo by Ed Smith

Here's the Flyer for the Greensboro Train show, venue for our March Division meeting (Road Trip) event:

*Sponsored by the
Carolina Model Railroaders, Greensboro, NC*

The 2020 GREENSBORO **'Best Little Train Show in** **Greensboro'**

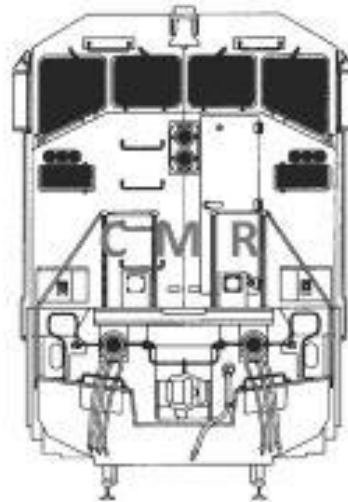
1-Day Show

Saturday, March 21, 2020

From 9 AM to 4PM

**Greensboro's Lewis Recrea-
tion
Center**

**3110 Forest Lawn Dr.
Entrance off Pisgah Church Rd
Greensboro, North Carolina 27455**



**Admission: \$5 (Children under 12 Free)
See the Worlds Smallest Electric Trains
Lots of Train Stuff For Sale**

HUGE COLLECTION OF MODEL TRUCKS AND CARS FOR SALE. Includes Winross, Hess, NASCAR, and more. Come by and see. Over 1000 trucks and cars for sale.

For Information Contact CMR:

**P.O. Box 13642
Greensboro, N.C. 27415.
E-Mail: Carolinamodelrr@aol.com
Web: Carolinamodelrr.Org**

For Show Vendors—Contact :

**Jim Turkett
jturkett@gmail.com
336.314.3341**



LOOK SOUTH IN 2020

MID-EASTERN REGION 2020 CONVENTION CAROLINA SPECIAL

OCTOBER 15TH – 18TH 2020

**Crowne Plaza Charlotte, Executive Park
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA**

**Carolina Southern Division is proud to be hosting
the MER 2020 Convention**

REGISTRATION IS OPEN AT THIS [LINK](#)

Convention activities will include:

- A wide selection of model railroading clinics, including by some nationally recognized names in the hobby
- Tour of the North Carolina Transportation Museum Back Shop and other non-public areas
- Tour of the Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum
- Tour of Wade's Train World in Brookford, a layout maintained by the CSD
- HO, S and N scale operating layouts in the Convention Hotel
- Home layout tours in the area, to include The Piedmont & Western and NYC Piney Fork Branch, which were both cover stories in *Model Railroader*
- Operating Sessions
- Shane Wilson, President of [Scale Trains](#) to be keynote speaker at banquet

MORE INFORMATION IS ON OUR WEBSITE

<http://carolinasouthern.org>

UPCOMING AREA TRAIN EVENTS

Greensboro Train Show

Saturday March 21st

9:00am – 4:00pm

Lewis Recreation Center

3110 Forest Lawn Dr.

Greensboro, NC 27455

18th Annual NC Railroad Expo

Saturday April 4th

9:00am – 4:00pm

Hickory Metro

Convention Center

1960 13th Ave Dr SE

Hickory, NC 28602

Historic Spencer Shops Train Show

May 16-17

Saturday 9:00am-5:00pm

Sunday 12:00-5:00pm

**NC Transportation
Museum**

1 Samuel Spencer Drive

Spencer, NC 28159

**Gastonia Train Show will
be in June 2020, but the
date does not yet appear
on the web.**

Editor's Notes

By Ed Gumphrey

It's March already, and I'm already so late with this edition of our newsletter that I've already passed the point of shifting to daylight savings time. But alas, I can't blame the delay on only losing one hour of sleep!

I'm glad this is a leap year, because I enjoyed the train show at Fletcher on the 29th. I was especially pleased with the display by [Rail Scale Models](#). I spent a good deal of time talking with Stephen Milley, the owner. We chatted about his company, future products, and the upcoming Convention. His laser cut and styrene models are impressive, and I purchased a healthy assortment of kits.

Anyhow, the good thing about it's being March is that more of train show season is upon us. In addition to the Road Trip event for the Division to the Greensboro show on Saturday, March 21st, Hickory's show is less than a month away, followed by Spencer in May and Gastonia in June. I'll update the banner on the left each month.

Let me hear from you. What do you want to see in the newsletter? What sections do you enjoy? Any comments about particular articles? If you have a layout under construction, I'd like to come visit and work up an article about it. Similarly, if you're doing a special kit build, expansion, scenery upgrades, take some pictures with your cell phone and send them to me. I'll be happy to work with you if you need help writing the article.

In closing my comments, I want to echo our Superintendent's thanks to Joe Skorch for hosting our February meeting. Although I missed it, I'm glad I'll be able to attend his next regular operating session. I'll also add thanks to Scott Perry and Ed Smith for their photos and comments about the meeting so I could report the news here.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

I target the 1st of each month for publication. Please submit articles for publication by the 27th of each month.

The preferred format is MS Word, but I can convert most other formats.

For questions and help, email me at editor@carolinasouthern.org

DIVISION AND REGIONAL NEWS

By Ed Gumphrey

The Division held its February meeting on Saturday, February 15th at the home of Joe Skorch in Kannapolis. A brief meeting was held followed by pizza for lunch before holding an operating session on Joe's Southern Pacific layout. Our thanks to Joe for hosting the meeting. By the way, if you're willing to host one of our meetings at your layout, contact our [Superintendent](#) Alan Hardee.

I was in the midst of a medical regimen, so I didn't make it to the meeting, but did get a good deal of feedback from Scott Perry, Joe Skorch, and Ed Smith. My thanks to them for the news and the pictures in this edition. 15 members attended the event.

Meeting discussion centered on:

- Convention planning update – a discussion of latest status
- Desire to boost attendance at next year's RMU
- Plans for March meeting – settled on our Road Trip event to Greensboro

One of the things that caught my eye looking at the photos was the lighted uncoupling picks. Through an email exchange with Scott Perry I learned that these were made with clear lucite rod and small keychain LED flashlights. So, I decided to collect the materials needed and have procured a batch of rods, flashlights and wire nuts. I'll coordinate with Alan Hardee to work the materials into a hands-on make-and-take clinic during one of our upcoming meetings. Keep watching for notice of when that will take place so you can join in and take a lighted uncoupling pick home with you.

Joe Skorch told me the operating session went well. Trains ran smoothly and the operators all seemed to enjoy themselves. Joe also expressed his thanks to Jack Haynes and Andrew Stitt. As regular operators during Joe's monthly sessions, they were already well familiar with the layout and helped guide other members during the session. I'll let a handful of photos tell the rest of the story of the operating session.



Some of the operators gather at the beginning of the session. I have planned to work up an article with Joe about his ingenious swing gate for a future edition. Photo by Scott Perry.



This overall view shows the “first impression” as you enter the railroad portion of Joe’s basement.
Photo by Scott Perry.



Watsonville Depot is only one of many well-built structures on Joe’s railroad.
Photo by Scott Perry.



The concentration level is palpable in this photo by Joe Skorch



Another overall view looking in the opposite direction from the top left photo.
Photo by Ed Smith.



This overall view shows “around the corner” from San Francisco.
Photo by Ed Smith.



This view shows part of the sugar beet refining industry – a key part of Joe’s operation.
Photo by Scott Perry.



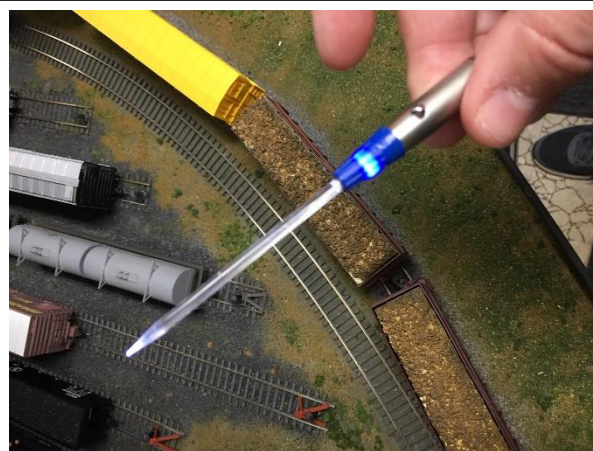
Another Scott Perry photo of the Holly sugar beet refinery complex. The SP had extensive sugar beet operations in coastal California.



Another photo by Joe Skorch of operators focusing on their tasks.



A small rural industry for collecting sugar beets to be transferred by rail for refining.
Photo by Scott Perry.



This ingenious lighted uncoupling pick will be featured in a future Division meeting.
Photo by Scott Perry.

DIVISION NEWS BITS AND PIECES

By Seth Gartner and Ed Gumphrey

Back in July of last year, Seth Gartner posted (on Facebook) a series of 18 photos of his work on a lower level section of his Piney Fork Branch of the New York Central. Seth posted *“5 months ago I had an itch. I focused on the Ohio & Pennsylvania Mine tipple area. So follow my journey from flat foam to 75% scenery. Lots of trees and bushes needed... slow work in progress. Not done yet.”*

The post struck me as an excellent series of step-by-step photos of his project. I immediately contacted Seth to get his permission to use the post in our newsletter. At first Seth was reluctant. In keeping with his high standards, he was not happy with the color tone of most of the photos and hoped to provide better photos for me. The only problem was that you can't go back in time to take new photos of the progress. We chatted again during the January meeting, and Seth agreed to let me use his photos and captions. I did a standard color correction on the photos and present them here as an example of what first captured my attention – a series of step-by-step pictures showing a project. The captions are all from Seth's original Facebook post. If you're on Facebook, you need to be following Seth's [NYC Piney Fork Branch](#) group.



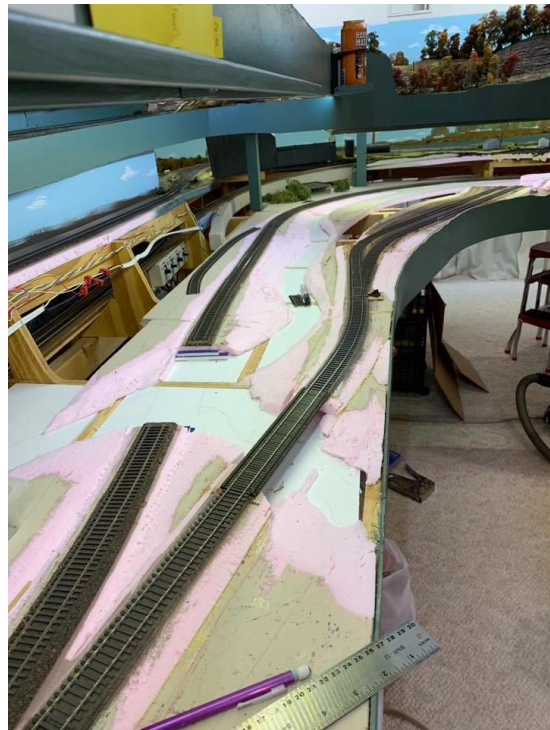
Current status in need of trees.



Starting point 5 months ago. Piney Fork Yard on top level.



Negative elevation. Making stream beds.



Future bridge spans.



Make a hill. Tipple cut back to two tracks and realigned with less curve.



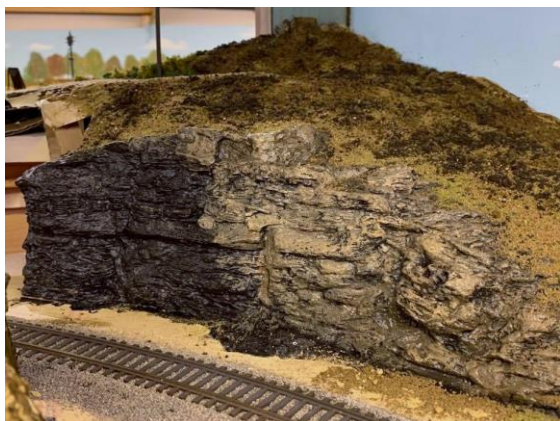
Next step in making the hill, masking tape.



Sculptamold over the tape. Hand carved rocks.



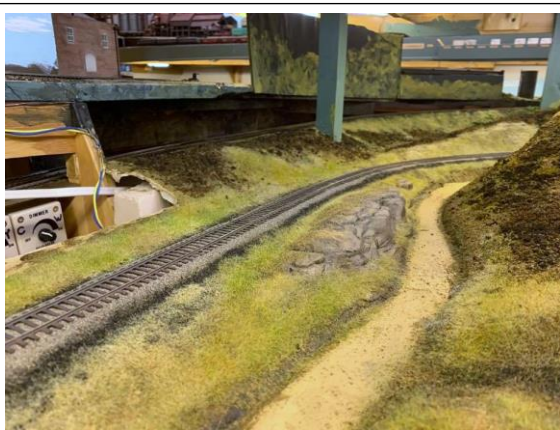
Painting the rocks. Some hydrocal molds were also used.



In progress painting of a hydrocal mold. Initial ground foam added on top.



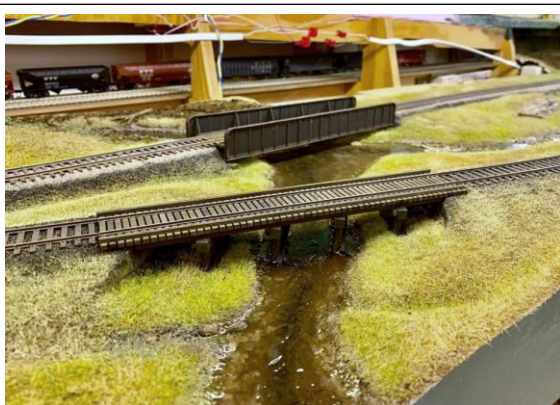
Ballasting done. Stream bed sealed with latex. Ground foam added.



Static grass added next. Different colors and different lengths make a more realistic appearance.



Stream bed painted, rocks added. Waiting for water.



Envirotex poured in multiple thin layers. Bridges placed. In need of backdrop.



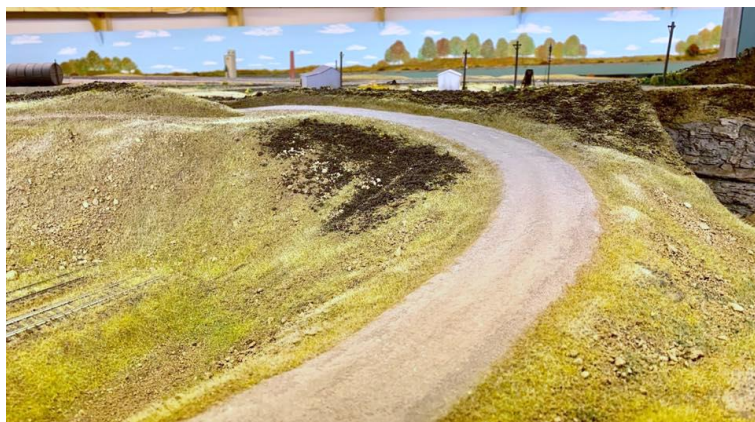
Stream details.



My first large foray into use of photo backdrops.



Looking towards the tipple's future location.



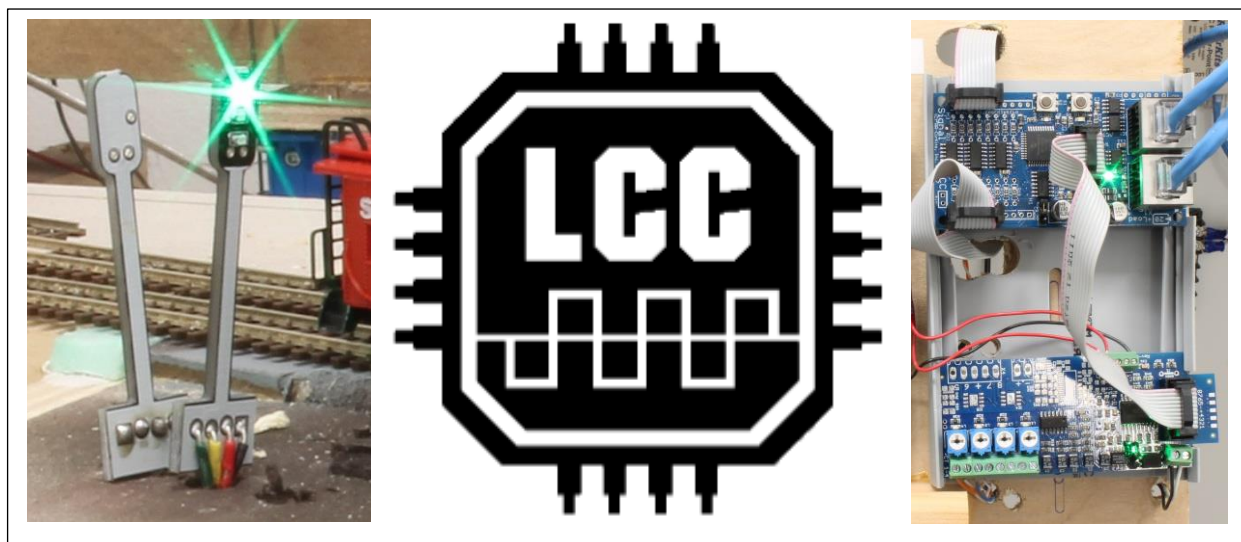
A country road.

I hope you enjoyed the step-by-step tour of this project. My thanks to Seth for letting me share this series of posts.



My Southern S-Line Layout Command Control Basic Hardware

By Tim Rumph



Now we will start getting into the details of LCC. On the left above is the Newton train order signal. On the right is the LCC node that controls this signal. This discussion will focus on the hardware produced by [RR-CirKits](#).

For the system to operate, it needs electrical power and communication between the nodes. Both of these are provided by standard Ethernet cables. These are available in many different lengths from a variety of electronic suppliers and home centers. You can also buy bulk wire, connectors, and an appropriate crimping tool. These are the blue cables in the upper right of the picture above. This is also called CAT-5 cable, and you should use cable with wire that is 24 AWG.

This CAT-5 cable is called the LCC bus. It should be connected in a continuous run from one node to the next on the layout. Don't make your bus into a circle. RR-CirKits has a device to make branches if needed. To power the LCC bus, use an LCC Power Point as shown on the right. The LCC Power-Point provides 1/2 amp (500 mA) to each of the CAT-5 cables connected to it. The LCC bus also requires a terminator at the ends of the buss. (Remember that you can't do a circle, so you should have two ends.) A terminator is shown below with another node.

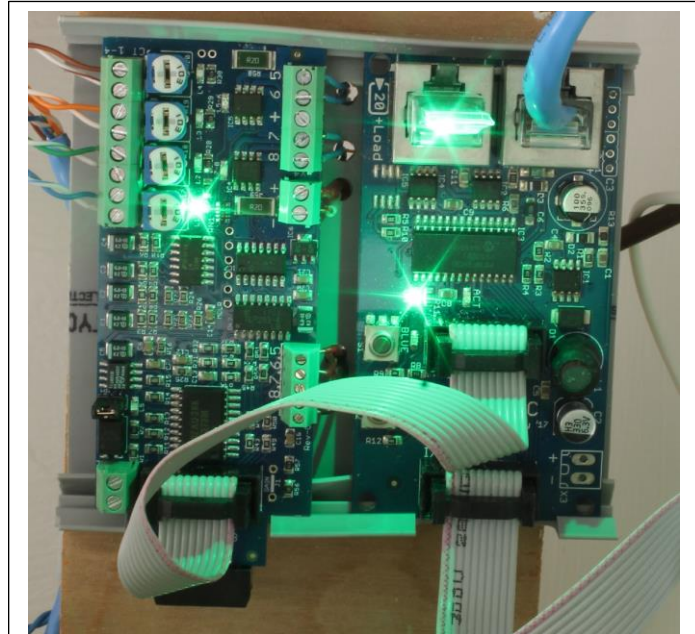


LCC Power Point

The glowing green device plugged in next to the CAT-5 cable is the terminator.

Now, you can configure the LCC nodes to do things without a computer plugged in, but you do need a computer to do the configuration. Fortunately, if you are using DCC to run your trains (though you don't need DCC to use LCC) it's a good chance that you already have JMRI. This is the same tool that is used to configure LCC nodes. If you don't have JMRI, you can download it from <https://www.jmri.org/download/>. You will also need one additional piece of hardware, the LCC Buffer-USB. The bottom photo on the right shows a typical programming set-up. This is at the end of my LCC bus, so I've moved the terminator to the LCC Buffer-USB.

The LCC Buffer-USB, LCC Power-point, and two LCC Terminators are included in the LCC Starter Kit available from RR-Cirkits.



LCC Node with Terminator



LCC Configuration Programming set-up

I've started sending information forms asking people to host layout tours and operating sessions during the MER convention here in Charlotte in October 2020. I'm still sending these out, so if I know that you have a layout, I'll be in touch. If I don't know about your layout, please contact me and I'll get the information to you. Also, if you know other people who have layouts, please ask them to contact me.

Tim Rumph
910-318-2676
tarumph@gmail.com
718 Canterbury Dr.
Lancaster, SC 29720

Visiting The Lumberyard

Selecting Lumber for Scratchbuilding Projects

Text and Photos by Scott G. Perry

Copyright © 2020 Scott G. Perry. All rights reserved. Duplication and publication are prohibited. Used with exclusive permission by the Carolina Southern Division NMRA.

A model is only as good as the materials it is constructed from. Most scratchbuilders love to work with wood, as do I. There is something about the feel of the basswood, its grain, its smell, and its texture that brings out the creativity in my hands. While it's not the only medium I use for model building it is certainly my favorite. Some modelers prefer to work only in wood, but I find that way too limiting.

The wood we use the most for scratchbuilding is basswood (Pic 1). It's a very fine grain wood that grows in North America. It is soft compared to other woods and easy to cut and carve. Basswood has been used in model building for many years. It is readily available in sticks at most craft stores and hobby shops and in small quantities very cheaply.

Another popular wood is balsa wood, which is popular with model airplane builders for its light weight and flexibility. For model railroading it is too soft and brittle to use and does not cut particularly well. Essentially, it's just too fragile for our hobby. It does have the ability to be a cheap base material for carving rocks and stones, such as a retaining wall.

Sugar pine is another favorite wood I like to use. It is a bit stronger than basswood and has a wonderful pine smell. I prefer to use sugar pine for crossties on trestles and bridges as they hold dimensional stability (and track gauge) much better than other products. While they usually have to be sawn rather than cut with a hobby knife, they make excellent vertical supports in structures and frames on rolling stock. But what do we need to buy for our next work of art? Let's have a look at our options.

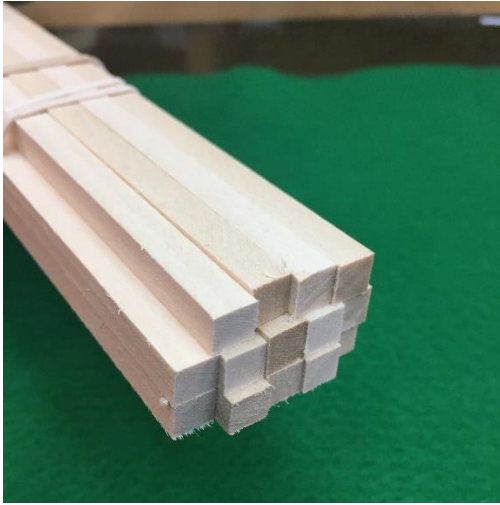
You can purchase basswood in two forms; as dimensional wood or as scale lumber. Dimensional (or fractional) wood is the most common at craft stores like Hobby Lobby. You'll find a display there, usually the Midwest brand, and they provide 24" sticks as we call them in a variety of shapes and sizes. You can also find sheets and blocks. Scale lumber is basswood that is precision cut to match the scale you are working with. For instance, you can buy a scale 1 foot x



Pic 1: This O scale 1' x 1' board is smooth and very square. It cuts very easy with a razor blade.

1 foot board for O scale, which is a more precisely cut $\frac{1}{4}$ " x $\frac{1}{4}$ " stick (Pic 2). Unlike a 2x4 at your local DIY store (really a 1.5x3.5 as finished lumber), a 2x4 in scale is a true 2x4.

Dimensional wood is often not very precisely cut and can have minor imperfections and lots of "fuzz." Fuzz is attached sawdust on the wood from the cutting process (Pic 3). This lower level quality of material reduces the usefulness of the wood for scratchbuilding. I model in O scale, so the fractions of inches make usable scale lumber for me, I just have to invest more time prepping the wood. My favorite use of this cheaper option is for bracing inside the structure I'm building. Thicker pieces applied to cardstock or milled and shaped wood sheets make strong supports that prevent warping. They are perfect for carving and for foundations as well.



Pic 2: A bundle of 1'x1' O scale boards bundled and from the factory. Boards this size travel well, unlike an N scale board of the same dimension. This wood is about the size of a drinking straw.



Pic 3: You can see the fuzz on the small side of the board. It is easily removed by very light sanding or a couple of strokes with fine steel wool. When painted it shows up even more.

Scale lumber is better for building a model, but you pay for the privilege as it is much more expensive than the dimensional option. There are many sources for it, including most hobby shops. The problem I have is that the hobby shops will have a small selection and you might be able to buy two or three packs of HO scale 2x4's, but that's all. Structures consume a lot of wood (Pic 4) and the bigger the scale, the more "board feet" you'll need. Often the scale wood in hobby shops comes in smaller 16-inch sticks. These go fast when building anything of size (Pic 5 on next page).

While I love to support my hobby shop, I buy my wood direct from suppliers. There are many out there, among them Mt. Albert (Fast Tracks), Kappler Mill & Lumber, and Northeastern Scale Lumber. I learned a habit (Skill? Sickness?) from the legendary scratchbuilder Bob Walker, of Accurail and RMC fame. I stock up on wood. Every time I make a purchase, I buy more than I need. Usually 20% more.



Pic 4: While this loading deck is very small compared to my hand, the board by board construction took an amazing amount of scale lumber and wood dowels to construct.



Pic 5: Board by board construction looks fantastic, but it chews up a lot of 16-inch-long scale lumber sticks really fast.



Pic 6: When I make trusses, I make about 3 or 4 extras because the roof must be properly aligned to look good. I throw some of them out because they don't meet specifications.

Over the years I've built quite a supply of scale lumber (and dimensional) in all scales and sizes. This prevents me having to wait on an order to get started and to work on small projects anytime I wish. It also gives me some backup in case I build something I don't like and must throw away (Pic 6).

Before ordering for a project I'll look at my drawings first and calculate the lumber sizes and lengths I'll need. Be sure to always factor in material for wall supports, scrap, and another 10% for mistakes. When I place my order, I choose the supplier by my project needs. Northeastern Scale Lumber is my pick when I need highly visible, very clean lumber like that needed for a highly detailed freight car, or special wood shapes like triangles or corner round. When strength and stability are needed, like the supports for a large coaling station I'll pick Kappler and their sugar pine lumber. My regular go to supplier would be Mt. Albert/Fast Tracks for larger orders and bulk shipments. I frequently use their bulk options which are 24" lengths with a minimum order of 50 sticks. You must plan for a new project because it takes time to get your order delivered. Mt. Albert is in Canada and orders take a little longer to get here.

Well, there is a third way to provide yourself with structural wood, and the method can be cheaper if you scratchbuild a lot. That option is to cut your own lumber. Cutting your own isn't much different than cutting lumber for a real house but we must do it on a much smaller scale. It takes a lot of patience, but it is wonderful to tell the NMRA Contest "Evaluators" that you made your model cabin out of a board from that very cabin! The Park Rangers are still looking for me.

To make scale lumber I use the Micro Mark Microlux Mini Tilt Arbor Table Saw Value Package Item #: 87727 (Pic 7). Now before you go look, I'll warn you that it has a whopping big price tag, as much as a full-size quality table saw. When I first bought it, I thought it would be almost impossible to cut enough wood to pay back the investment. To my surprise I use it quite

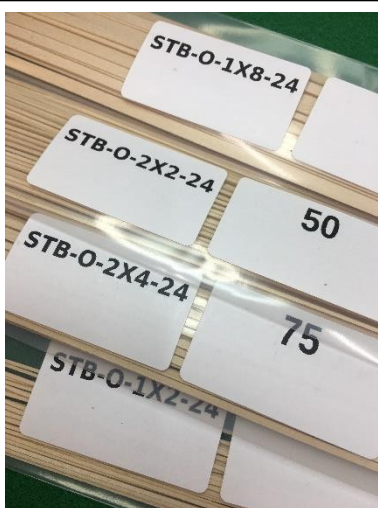
frequently and cut many other things such as frames for RTV molding, thin model base boards, Plexiglas and acrylic sheet. The kit comes with clear blank blade plates which prevents gaps so you can cut small strips. It also comes with ripping gauges that help you set up perfect dimensional wood cuts. The saw works amazingly well with enough power to make smooth cuts.

I use my regular home table saw to reduce 2x4 or 2x2 basswood boards that I purchase from lumber specialty stores. Usually I cut these to 20" lengths with the chop saw first, then the table saw rips them to one of the two dimensions I need, say O scale 1 foot (1/4"). I'll then take this plank to the mini saw and cut the second dimension, say 2 scale inches, giving me a finished 2x10 board. I will use either a fine steel wool pad or a 400-grit sanding block and finish the wood on all sides. The fuzzies maybe hard to see, but just wait until you photograph your model with a high-resolution camera! When you consider how many 2x10's can come from a full size 2x4, that is a great value and you can control the quality. In one evening, you can make all the scale lumber you need for the project. The tradeoff is the upfront investment and your time.



Pic 7: The Micro Mark Microlux Mini Tilt Arbor Table Saw is a very handy tool and a great way to supply your wood needs but comes with a very high initial cost.

When your wood arrives, open the packaging carefully (Pic 8). You should have a packing list, so check off your order with what's in the box. I've never had a short shipment and usually find that I get an extra stick or too. I inspect for warpage and shipping damage. Bulk can arrive rubber banded together (Pic 9) or in plastic bags. Thin strips can easily be damaged by rubber bands, but bagged stock usually comes in good shape. Using a wood gauge or digital caliper and



Pic 8: A good supplier will bag the wood to keep it dry and help protect it from damage. These are clearly labeled with scale, size, and the count in the package. From Mt. Albert.



Pic 9: A special order of scale lumber from Mt. Albert, rubber banded together with a tag telling the scale and size. The tags fall off so keep an eye on them.

check the dimensions of the wood. This will tell you if it is cut properly and if it has absorbed any moisture. Basswood is very susceptible to moisture so if the box or any of the wood is wet after shipping be sure to dry it thoroughly. I place it under glass sheets and press it for several days. I leave the wood in its plastic cover and store it in my wood drawer or tube. Rubber banded stock is removed from the band and stored as loose stock in a tube/pipe or drawer. Basswood must be stored flat or it will warp. Don't hesitate to call your supplier if you are not happy with your shipment as they are always happy to help.

Wood storage is a space eater, especially when you finally build a good supply. The important things to remember are to keep it dry and keep it flat. Tubes and pipes are frequently used as a method for storage. I'm not a fan of that method but I live in the South where humidity is a huge problem. For Arizona its probably a great idea. You can take cardboard 2" diameter tubes or 2" PVC pipes and cut them to a few inches shorter than the stick length. Cut a dozen of these and fasten them together with tape or a frame and you have a storage system. I prefer to use an Ikea drawer set with six 24" drawers called the Alex (Pic 10). The wide drawers make a great flat surface and the whole unit moves so I can push it out of the way when it is not needed.

There are many other shapes and types of wood for scratchbuilding. You can buy clapboard sheets milled in any size (Pic 11). Hardwood dowels, which are very hard to cut without power tools, are readily available at Walmart. We even have laser etched brick sheets that look fantastic. My all-time favorite that I use for On30 construction is wood coffee stir sticks which are very cheap by the box and make for very appealing worn and aged wood. Look around when you are shopping and start building a collection of wood and get ready for that next project!



Pic 10: My Ikea "Alex" with 26" draws is set on wheels. This keeps the wood flat, easy to find, and can roll away under the table when I'm done.



Pic 11: This is O Scale clapboard siding is milled into one sheet. It saves a lot of time versus board by board construction.

CLOSING PAGE BONUS



Norfolk Southern Heritage units on the turntable at NC Transportation Museum

Photo from internet search

Division Brass

<u>Superintendent</u>	Alan Hardee	superintendent@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Asst. Superintendent</u>	Andrew Stitt	assistsuper@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Clerk</u>	Ed Gumphrey	clerk@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Paymaster</u>	David Thrams	Paymaster@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Director 2022</u>	Ed Smith	director1@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Director 2023</u>	Scott Perry	director2@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Director 2021</u>	Larry Paffrath	director3@carolinasouthern.org
<u>AP Chairman</u>	Neal Anderson, MMR	Apchair@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Webmaster</u>	Gil Brauch, MMR	Webmaster@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Newsletter Editor</u>	Ed Gumphrey	editor@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Program Chair</u>	Scott Perry	program@carolinasouthern.org
<u>RMU Chair</u>	Doug Algire	RMUchair@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Publicity Chair</u>	Marcus Neubacher	publicity@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Membership</u>	Nancy Campbell	membership@carolinasouthern.org