

#144 JULY 2022

N SCALE RAILROADING

THE BEST OF 1:160 SINCE 2000

George Hollwedel

- Sugar Beet Cars

Ken Harstine

- Restoring and Improving Locomotive Contacts

Sandy Smith

- Lights!
- What If?: ATSF Blue Line

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There are many types of modeling. Most model railroaders model historical equipment and scenes in four dimensions (x,y,z, time). But what would the world look like if a component or three are changed? Sandy Smith explore this. See page 30.

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Welcome to *N Scale Railroading* #144, the July, 2022 issue.

Page 04. New Products.

Page 06. Sugar beets were a special commodity for Southern Pacific. Here **George Hollwedel** shares how he modeled sugar beet rolling stock for his SP railroad.

Page 12. Lighting our layouts can be more complicated than we anticipate. **Sandy Smith** shares how he has lit his recent construction.

Page 24. As great as many of our locomotives are: If we run them they will need maintenance. **Ken Harstine** shares how he maintains his Kato type design locomotives.

Page 30. **Sandy Smith** purchased an undecorated passenger car he really likes that his prototype, the Santa Fe, never had. As a fan of the biz side of the prototype he came up with a scenario where the Santa Fe might operate short overnight service between their facilities.

Page 33. **NCalendar** and **NHorizons**. ▮

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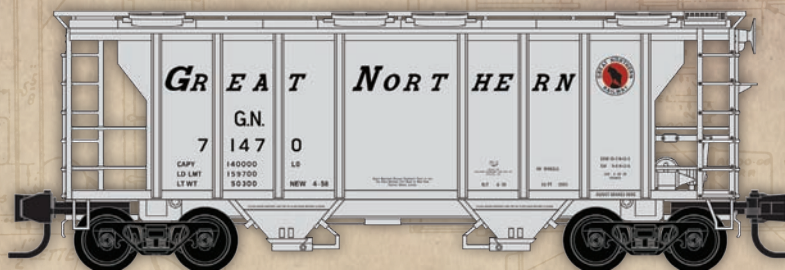
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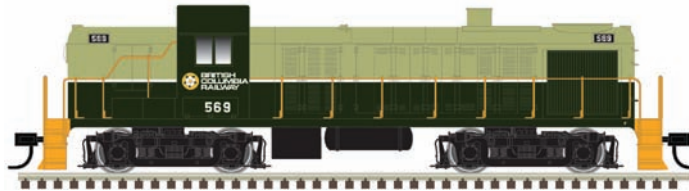
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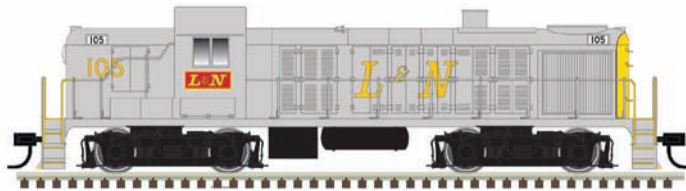
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LOADING UP ON

SUGAR BEETS

By George Hollwedel/ Images by author

On my early 1950's Southern Pacific themed layout I have amassed a fleet of composite construction GS gondolas to use for sugar beet traffic. Intermountain has produced these cars from the Tichy Train Group kits that were originally produced

by Dimi Trains quite some time ago. The photo above shows a completed car next to an out of the box model. These cars are available in the original configuration that I use and the later version with side extensions applied. My timeframe calls for the original style.



Image 01 shows the mechanical modifications to meet the standards of my layout. My cars all get a coat of flat clear paint. I have found that Tamiya TS-80 Flat Clear is the best paint for this application. I body mount couplers and run metal wheels on all my cars. These body mount couplers are Micro-Trains

1015. I decided to use BLMA 9045 70 Ton Solid Bearing trucks for these cars. These trucks come with metal wheels. I drilled right through the floor and then tapped the hole. A 3/16" flat head 00-90 screw comes out flush with the floor inside the car.

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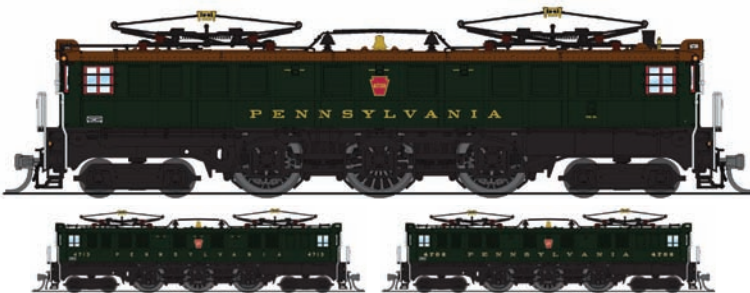
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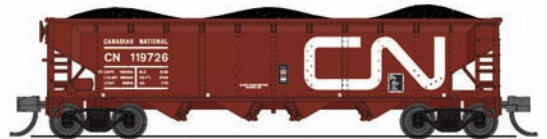
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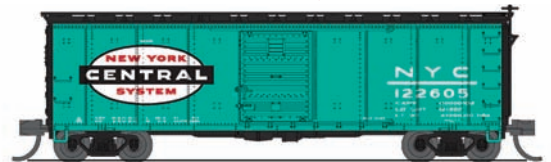
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02

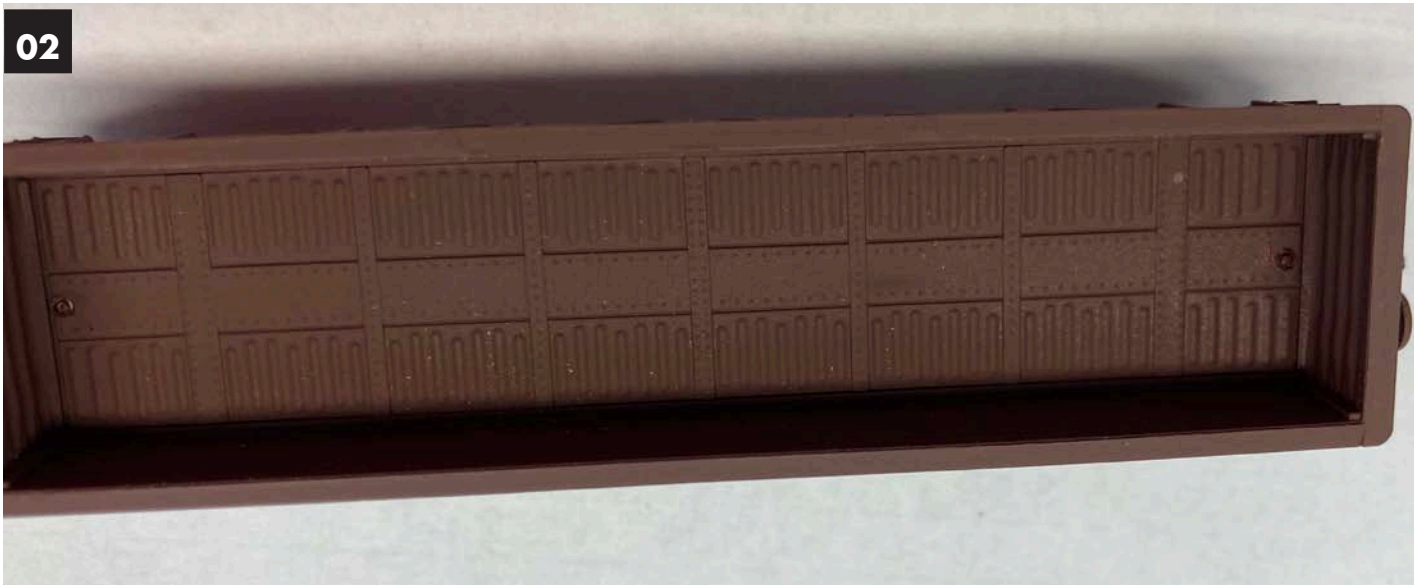


Image 02 shows the car interior after the couplers are mounted. I just put a tiny dab of car color paint on the end of the screw, and it is nearly invisible.

03

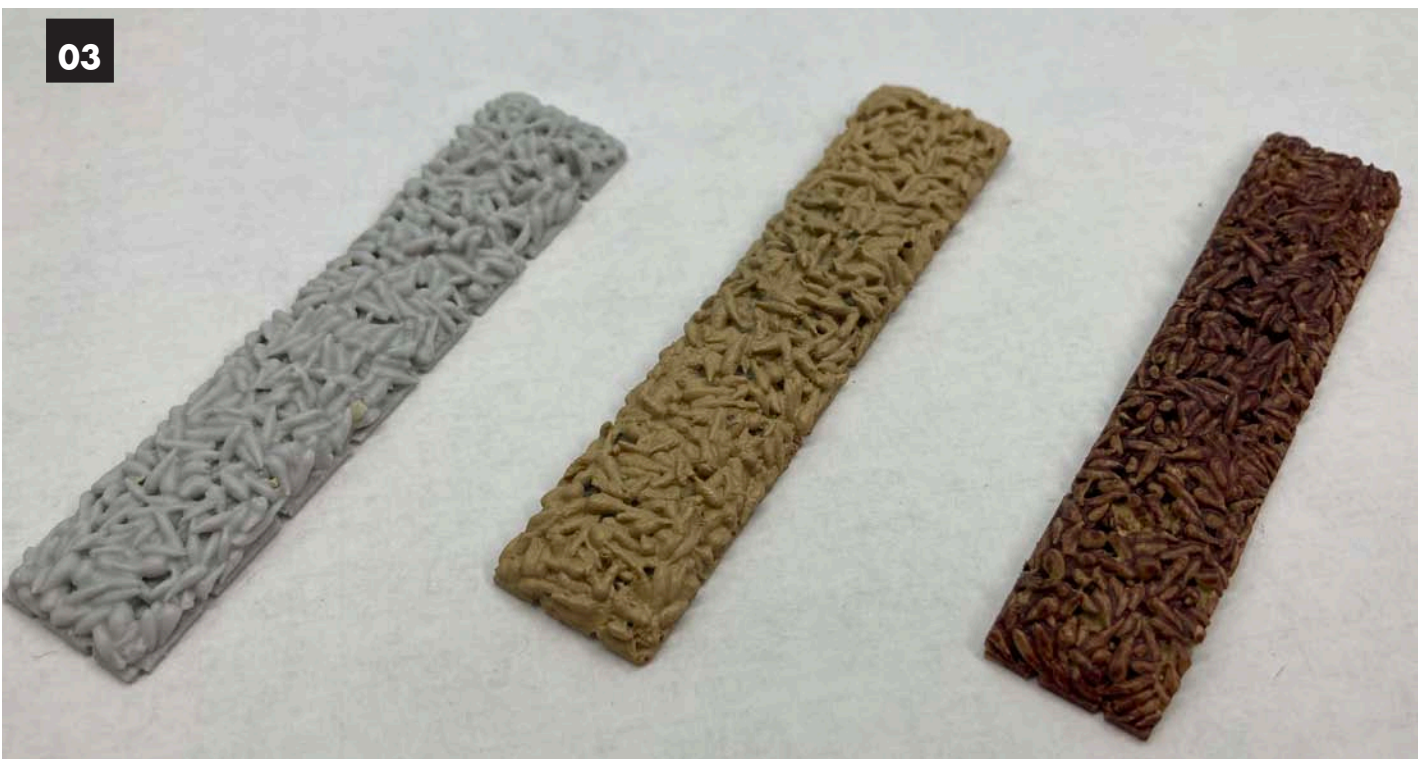


Image 03 shows the Fine N Scale part number 121 sugar beet loads in the various states of prep. On the left is an unpainted load. The middle load has had a coat of Tamiya TS-46 Light Sand paint applied. Finally, the load on the right has had a thin

wash of brown applied. I just used what I had on hand, in this case it was Tru-Color TCP-019 Santa Fe Brown. Sugar beets are not red, they are a dull white and when they are loaded for shipment they are still coated with dirt.

FINALLY F40s!



[CLICK HERE](#)

04



Image 04 shows the spacer needed to raise the load up to proper height in the car. For the original configuration GS car a 3/16" thick piece of basswood does the trick.

05

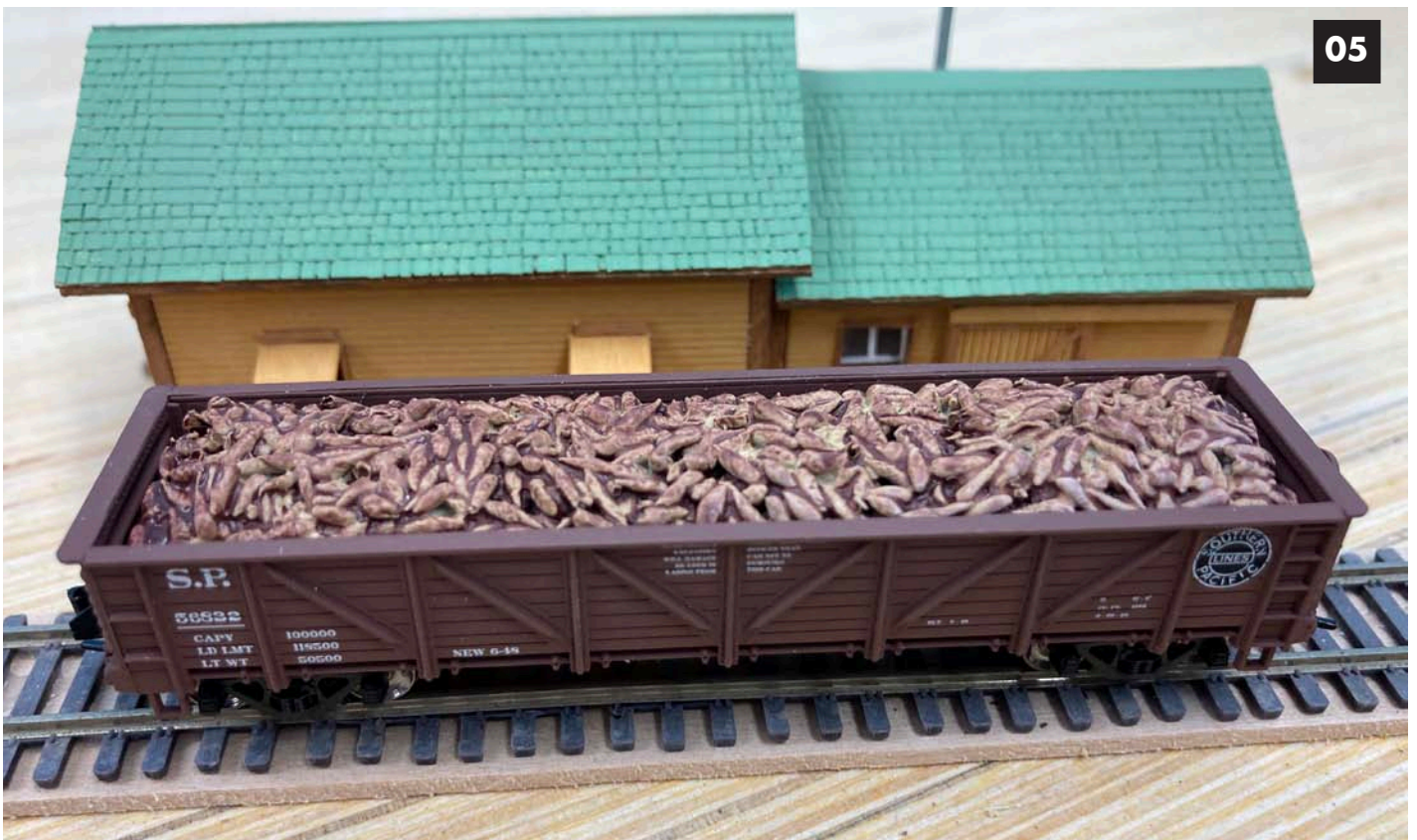


Image 05 shows the completed, loaded car ready to rack up revenue for my railroad. ▶

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LIGHTS!

By Sandy Smith/ Images by author



01 Overview of light sources, Window natural light about 7000K, City 5000K, Baxter CA on right shelf and Hauk, N.M. on left in 2700K.

Lights!, Camera!, Action! ever notice the lights are always first in this call to action on a set?

I know they take the longest to get up to working condition but did you ever try and roust a star from his/her trailer? Being a fan of photography and films I was once told that, "film making is 90% moving the lights and 10% making sure the camera is working." In our miniature worlds that we craft so precisely, a lighting eccentric like myself has to have good light from the beginning or at least a direction of how I want the railroad to look when operating. I have some nice 4000K ceiling mounted light fixtures for general purposes above my layout. While these were great during the initial construction and I continue to use, I wanted the final product to have some "kinder and gentler" illumination (photo 1)

Most model railroad photography/imaging has too strong of a primary light source which yields a high contrast between the light and shade which is un-natural looking to me. This heavy contrast reminds me of a sunny day but with a large storm approaching which truncates the natural fill light. A very dramatic look but not what I am after. As a modeler that is more interested in watching my trains run and railfan them, I wanted the visual to have that look of a fine lighting set up for the magazine cover.

Yes you can adjust the contrast, black point and exposure very

easily with digital photography but it never really looks natural. The exposure difference between full sun and full shade on a blue sky day is only about 2 and 1/2 stops of exposure or 20-25% of the total light value. (See, I told you I was a bit obsessed with correct light.) So this is why those modules or dioramas taken outside for photography look so great, but when in the train room not as good. Our eyes and brains make fabulous adjustments to light temperatures, contrast and cropping/framing when we are looking at our models.

Museums they take great effort to focus your eyes on the subject they want to show you. This is done by darkening the room light, highlighting the subject and framing it with walls and borders almost a picture frame. Natural history museums use this technique almost everywhere in their scene recreations. This is exactly the sort of look that I wanted for my railroad. Besides, if I got this right, visitors would focus on the layout and not see as much of the clutter that accumulates with any layout.

Enter the lighting valance or as my friend George calls it, "your layout roof." (photo 2)

I used strips of LEDs, fastened to the bottom of the valance. These strips are connected through dimmers to vary my preferences such as a late afternoon or a midday sun.



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02 Peninsula Hawk, N.M.



03 Baxter, CA with no eye shade/upper fascia installed.

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04 Bad shadow in the large city coming from poor utilization of upper fascia by author.

Couple of things to remember if you go this route:

LEDs are rated in C.R.I., color rendering index (1-100) is how well the LEDs return the actual color values when reflected off the subject. The best CRI comes from a Halogen bulb which is about 99.5 CRI. Most quality LEDs should be above 90 CRI.

Get LEDs which are dimmable, this will require a dimmable driver (power supply/transformer for us mortals) that can accept variable power input to supply variable voltage to the LEDs.

Most LEDs come in 4000k which is not quite daylight, which is 6000K, or shade at 7000K (yes, the light in the shadows is very blue). If you really want to bore down a hole, there is a slight shift in temperature in the winter (northern hemisphere) months because the sunlight has to travel through more atmosphere.

You will need some sort of shielding for your eyes as strips of LEDs can give you spots on your retinas which is finally the point of this article. The white masonite hanging down acts as this shade for your eyes (photo 3)

There were three portions of my railroad that I ended up with, unfortunate shadows. First in my large city (photo 4) where the snow squall front is moving

into, second, the upgrade section of the peninsula coming westbound from Wolfrum, CO, (photo 5) and third on Main street in Baxter, CA (photo 6). In all three instances I had made the overhang too short. This is due to my lack of proper measurement, or fear of hitting my head as I bent over to work on the railroad or worry about the aesthetic of too much lumber up in the air. Even though I painted the underside of the valence (layout roof) white to get some additional fill light, I still had the dreaded, unfortunate shadows.

My goal in all this is to replicate natural light as best as I could. When taking prototype images you try to get the sun slightly behind the camera to get some fill light on the truck side frames and other darker details, above the subject and behind the camera.

The LED strips I used had a self adhesive backing that was quite strong and I slowly peeled the strips from the overhead boards (photo 7). At one point the LED strip did tear taking out three lights/diodes. The three were cut out and the light tape spliced. I constricted a new top for the peninsula (photo 8), I put up a wider shelf for Baxter, CA and extended the upper fascia eye shield for the large city (photo 9).

I used 5000K for the large city as it is

overcast and March (photo 10) with an advancing snow storm. I tried some 7000K but it looked too blue to my eyes that were adjusted to indoors. The other 2/3rds of the layout that starts in the plains section, are bathed in a warm 2700K (photo 11). Yes these are a lower Kelvin temperature level and warmer light than in nature but as I mentioned it works for how I want to see the layout when I am watching trains. Sometimes you can see the blueness of light outside when you take a photo indoors that is balanced for indoor light but you can also see outside, your eyes correct this.

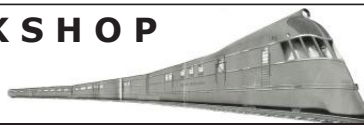
The beauty of the LED tape strips is they are very easy to attach and re-attach with some double sided foam tape. They can be expanded easily with a small connecting splice which came with these kits and they are very flexible to go around things (photo 12-13). Of course the low thermal temperature and low electric current consumption of LEDs are also benefits, but you knew that.

These photos show the final results of the changes to the overhead lights and how the color temps affect the look of the scene (photos 14-15-16).

I hope these ideas from lighting enthusiast will help you get your lighting squared away on your layout project.

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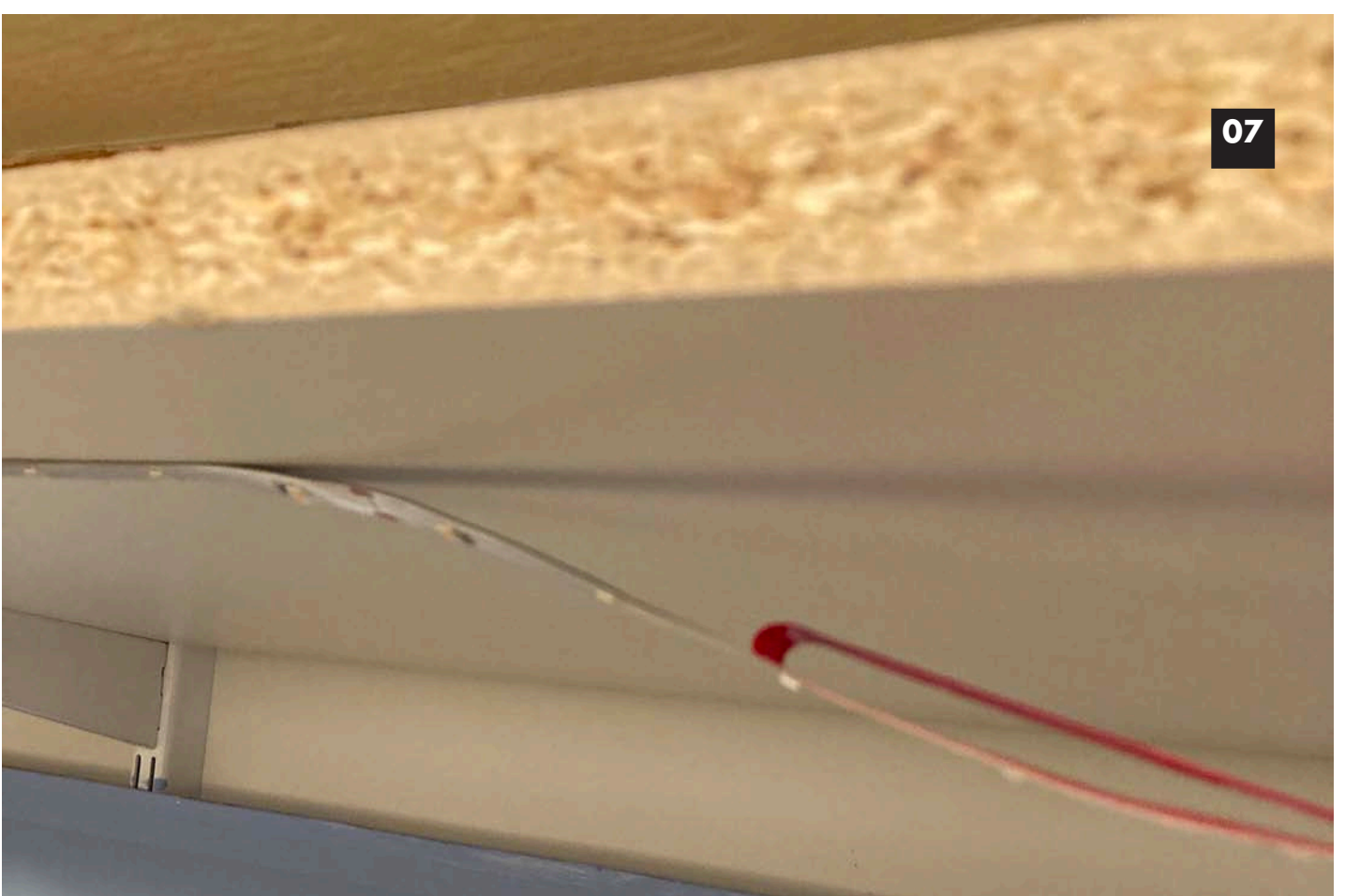


05 Wolfrum, Co at the end of the aisle, note the upgrade tracks on right have a massive, unrealistic shadow.



06 Baxter, CA with a huge line bisecting the street and casting shadows on the building fronts.

07



07 Peeling of the backing on a tape of LEDs.

08



08 Wife's author documenting actual labor.



09 Mostly fixed shadow line in large city snow squall line.



10 What the city os supposed to look like with minimal lights on in the room.



11 Camera is set to 2700k which makes the plains and peninsula look like white white. The industrial section to the left is under 5000k LEDs.



12 Bendy, sticky LED tape, love it!



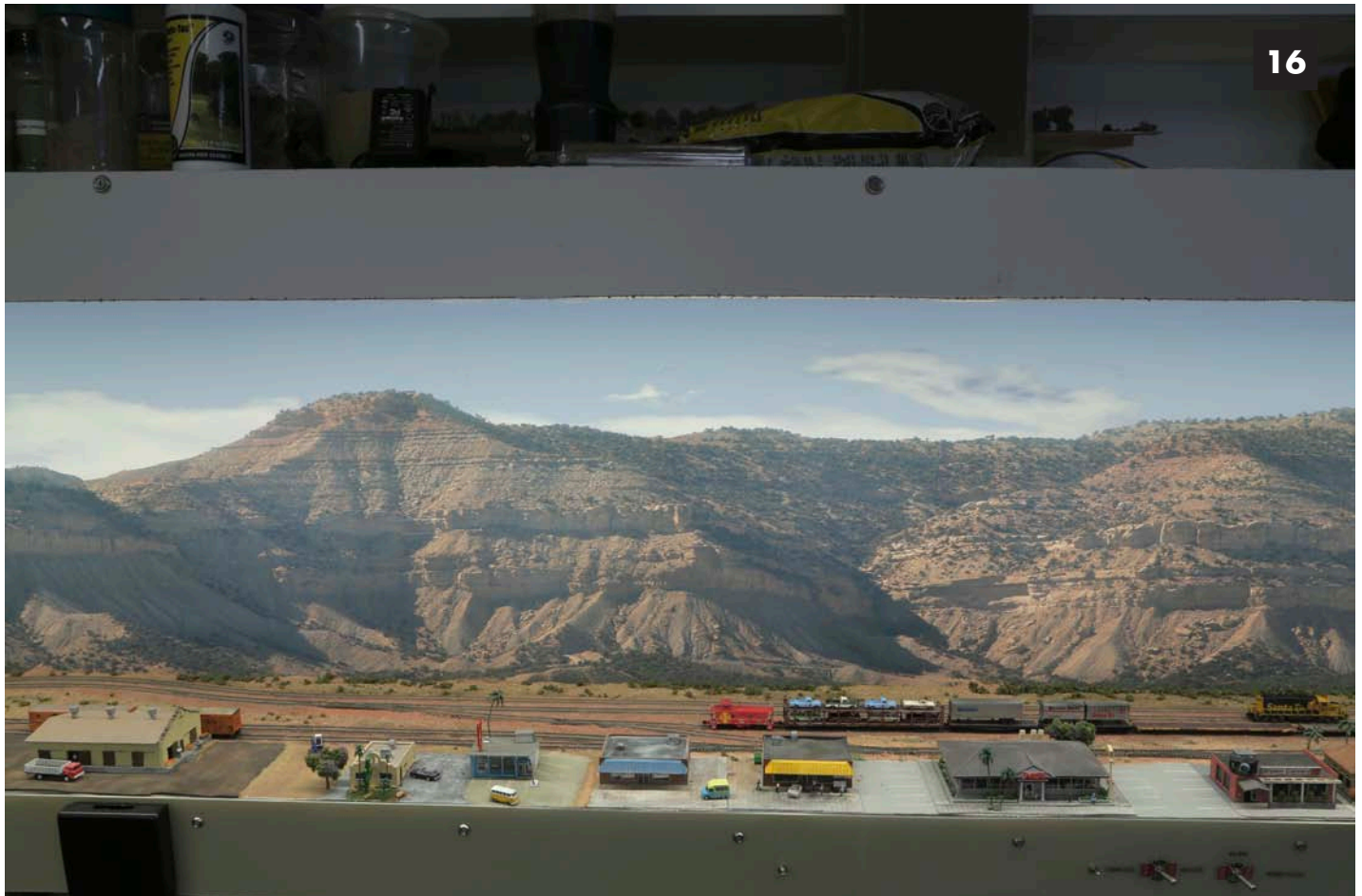
13 Underside of the peninsula lights.



14 Looks like a late storm headed to town soon.



15 Not perfect but better look to the peninsula.



16 Baxter, CA yard on a warm March afternoon while a GP-20 collects it's train. ▶

RESTORING AND IMPROVING

LOCOMOTIVE CONTACTS

By Ken Harstine/ Images by author and Sandy Ward

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If you like operations as much as I do, then you know how frustrating it is to constantly prod your locomotive to move. In N Scale that means the contact system of the locomotives must perform nearly flawlessly. The enemy of good electrical contact is corrosion and contaminants. Both of these occur naturally over time. I have worked out a process that, in addition to clean track, provides nearly flawless operation in switching. Of course you have to start with a good locomotive design and track work. The contact system developed by Kato in the late 80s and copied by many others including Atlas and Intermountain is the best at this time. Unfortunately even the best contact system is subject to corrosion unless steps are taken. Corrosion will always happen when different metals are in contact with each other in the presence of air and water.

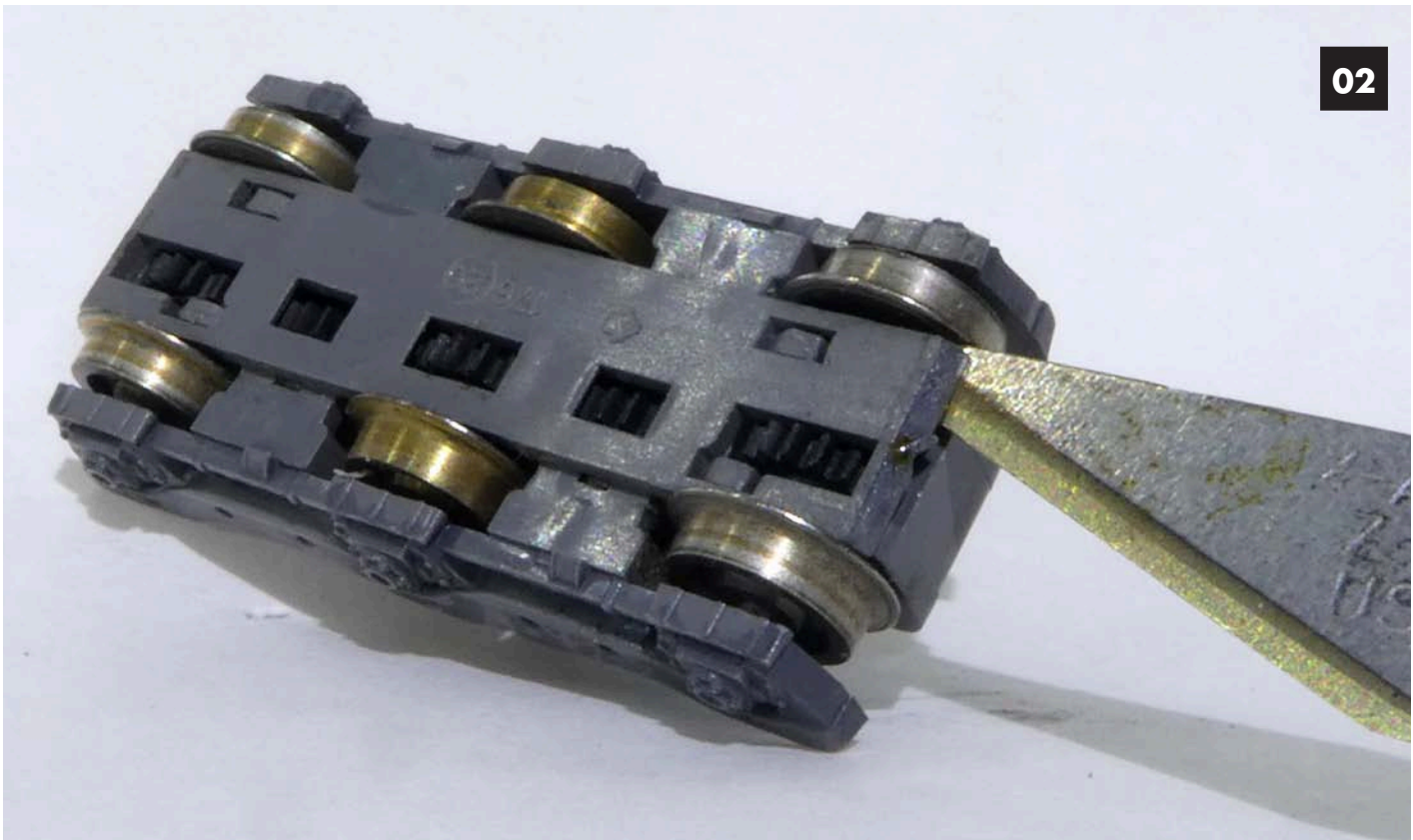
The contacting metals in our locomotives are zinc, phosphor bronze, nickel silver and copper. First we will remove the corrosion. Then we will coat the contacting parts with fluids designed to prevent corrosion.

Of course track work is also part of the electrical system so don't take short cuts there either. Power all those frogs and make sure that the points are reliably powered and of course the top surfaces are clean. This article is aimed specifically at N Scale diesels and electrics, but the ideas can be applied to any scale and type of locomotive.

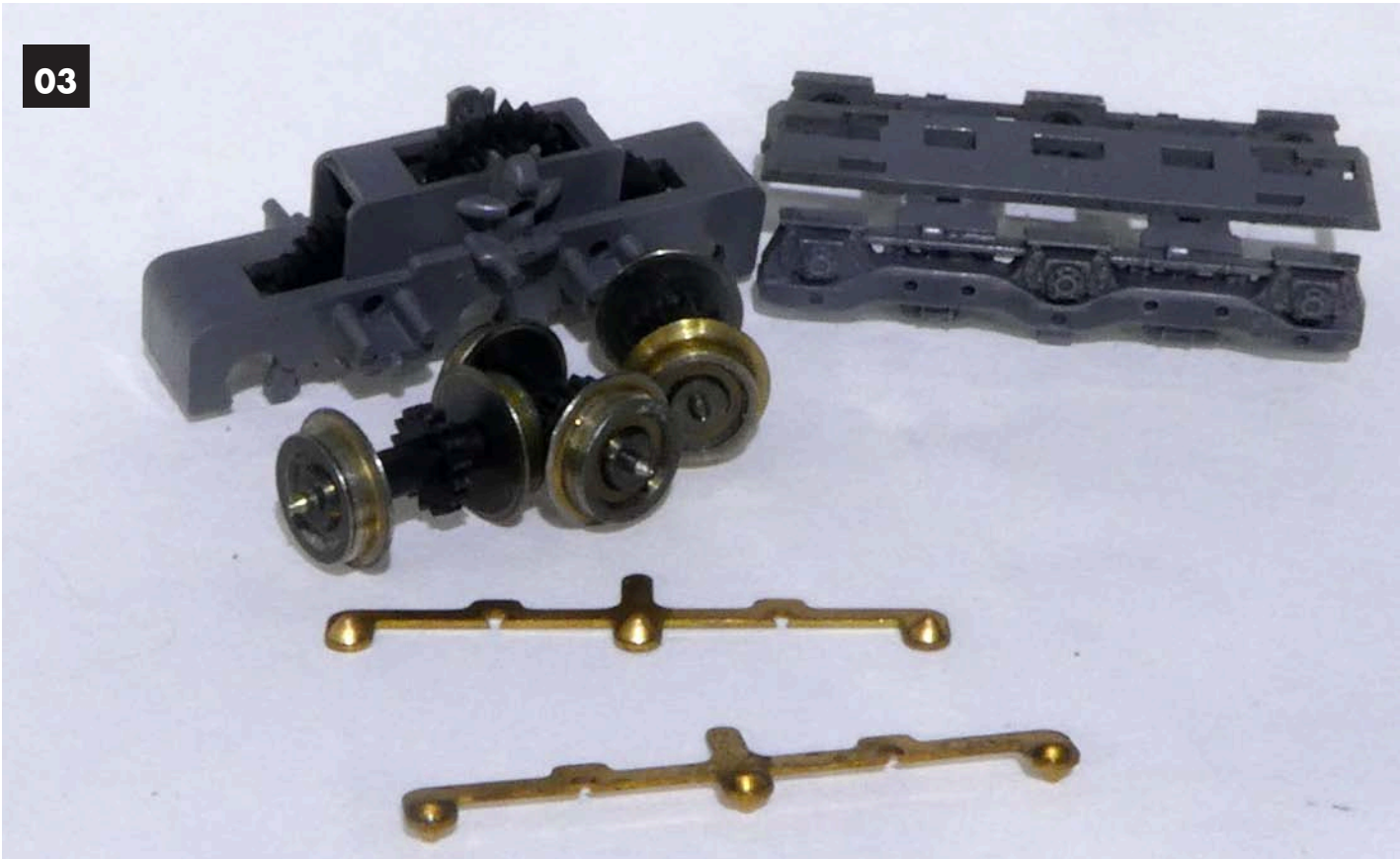
The first step is to disassemble the locomotive and trucks. Remove the shell and fuel tank. **Figure 01**



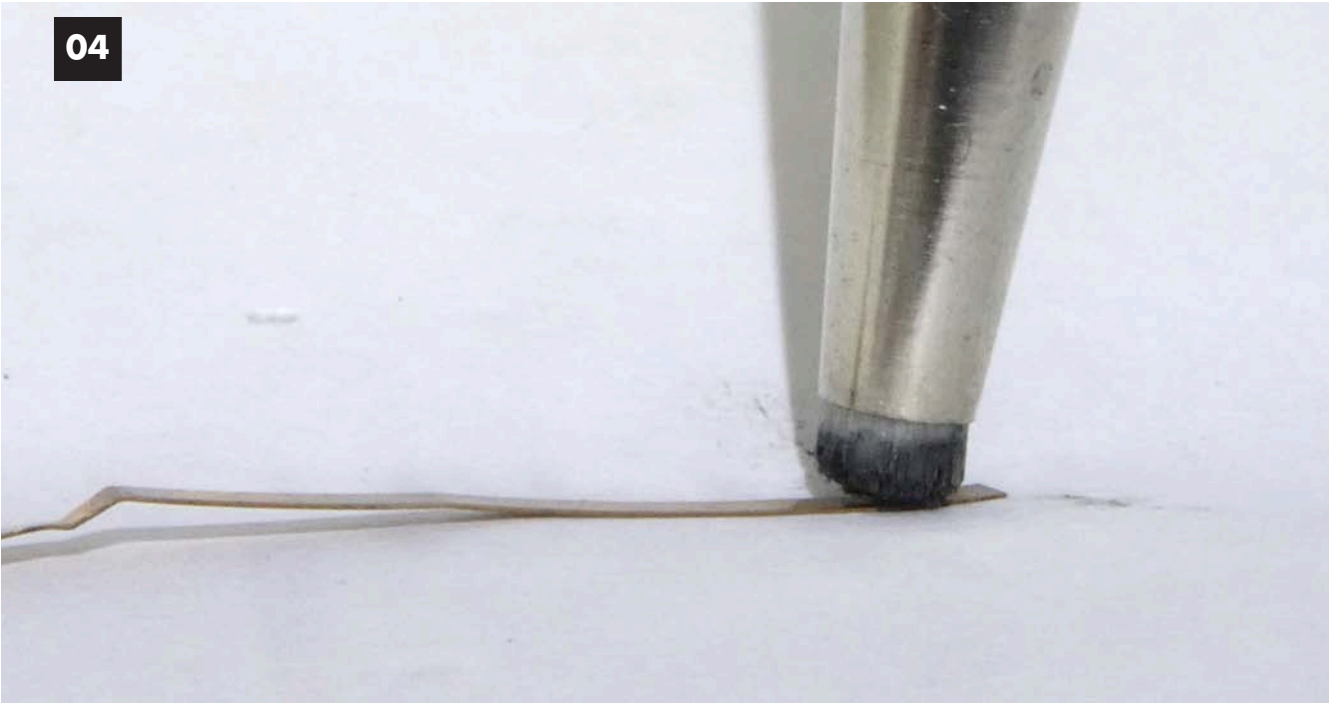
The shell and walkways should lift off with a little gentle prying from underneath. The tank also pops off and this allows the leaf contacts to come free. See **figure 1**.



To remove the trucks you need to partially back out the screws that hold the chassis halves together until the trucks drop out. Now disassemble the trucks by gently prying the side frames from the truck. When the side frame is removed, the journal contacts will be free. The wheel sets can now be popped out. See **figures 02 & 03**.



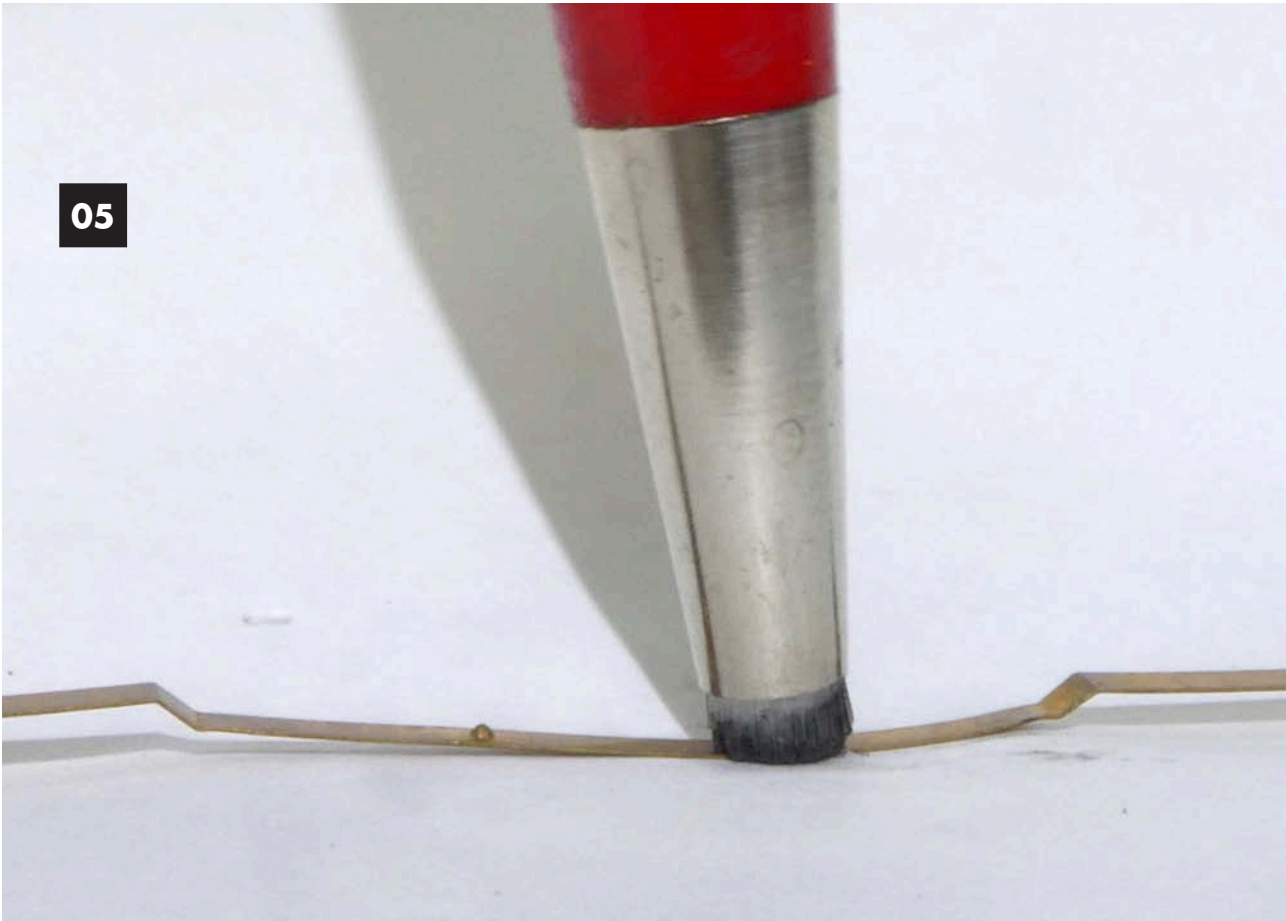
04

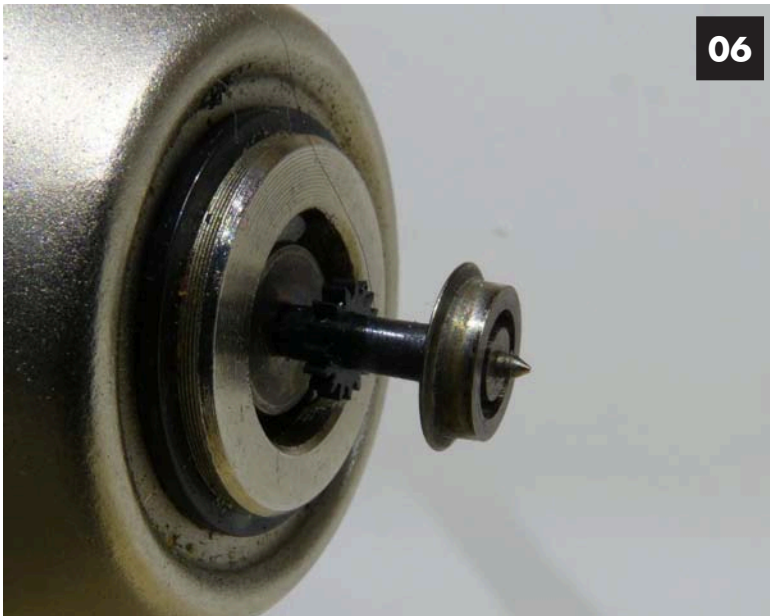


To clean and remove oxide from the parts, I recommend the use of a fiberglass burnishing tool such as sold by Micromark or Eurotool BRS-295.00. When cleaning is finished, I apply a tiny amount of Sanchem "No-ox-id A" grease to the contacting areas to prevent re-oxidation. Oxidation is a particular problem where two different metals are involved, and air and/or water are present. This even applies to brass on brass contacts because the brasses may contain different concentrations of elements. The "No-ox-id A" grease helps by keeping the air and water away from the metal.

Start the cleaning process with the leaf contacts. Clean both the parts that connect to the trucks and the nubs that connect to the chassis. See **figures 04 & 05**.

05





06

Next work on the wheel sets. Examine the plating on the wheel sets. If the plating is worn through to the brass, then it is best to replace the wheel sets entirely. You can get replacement wheel sets from most manufacturers. The cleaning process removes oxidation and also chemical blackening. See **figure 06**.

To clean the wheel sets I lightly clamp the tread surface into my electric drill chuck. Do not clamp them by the flanges. Warning: over tightness can dent the wheel surface. Perfect alignment is not necessary. I run the drill at high speed and apply the fiberglass tool with light pressure until the wheels and the needle points are shiny. The wheels may pop out of the drill occasionally. It is better to have them drop out than to have over tightened them. See **figures 07 & 8**.



07

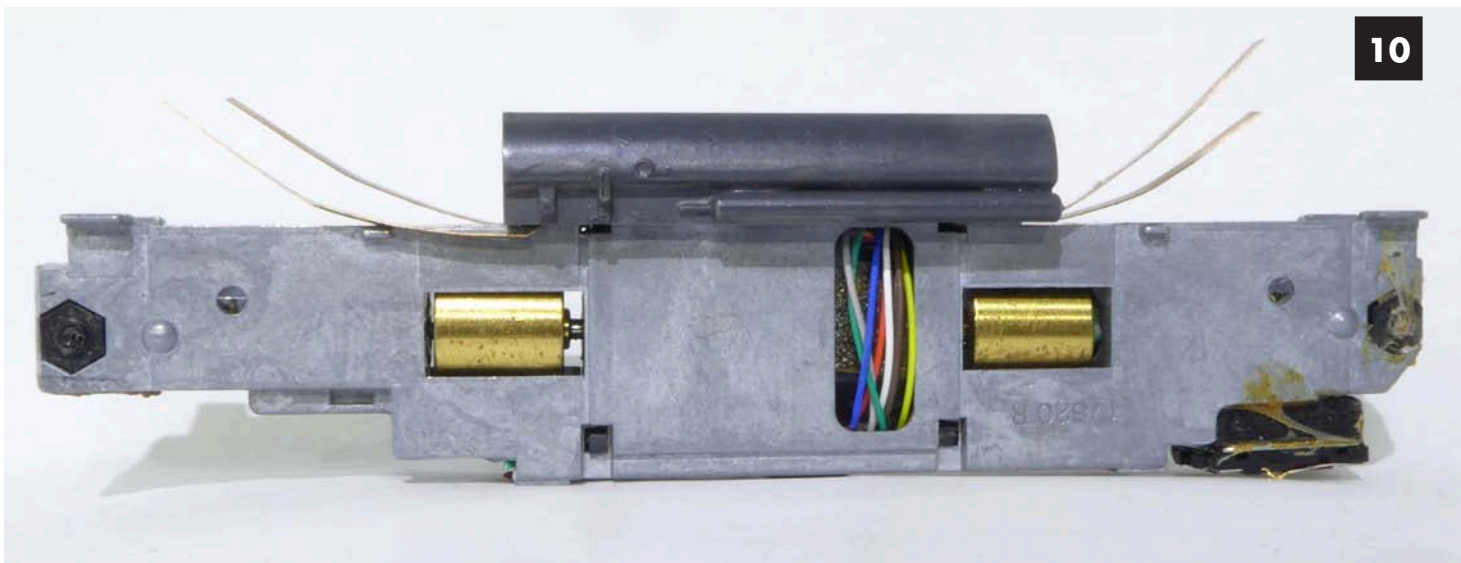


08

09

The metal ring on my low-cost Dewalt drill spins independently, and this allows me to steady my hand by resting it on the ring while running the drill.

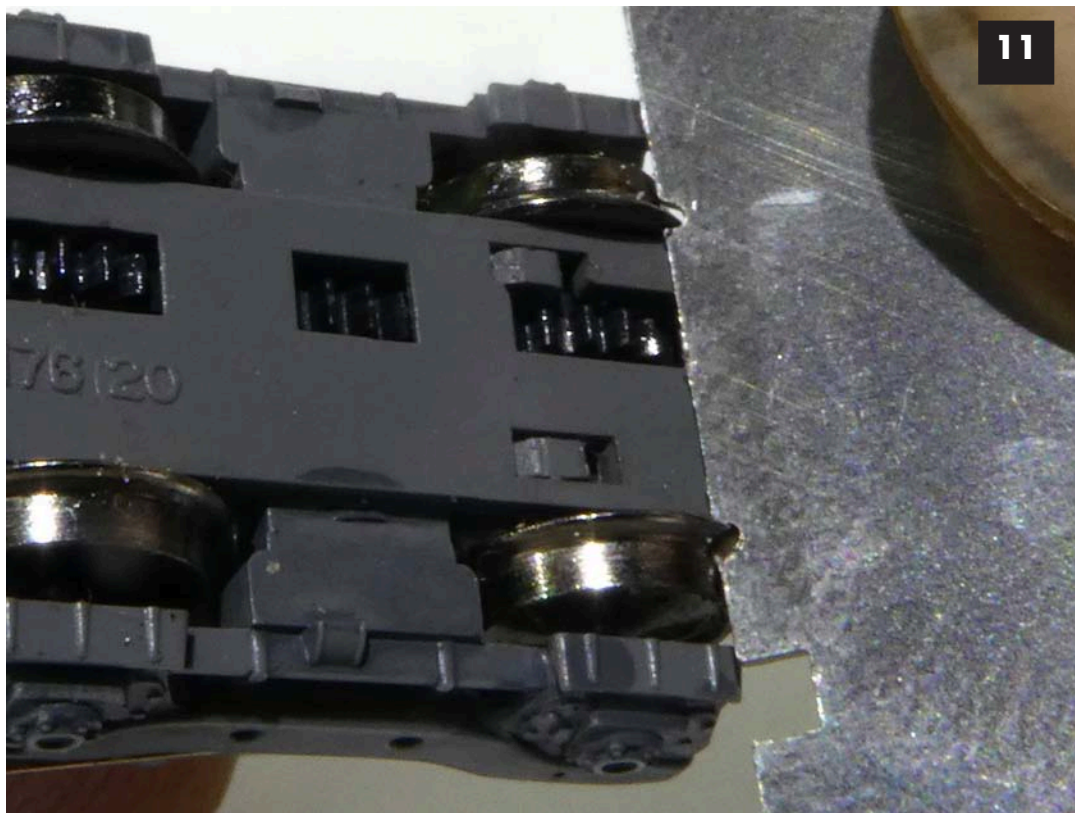
Now clean the brass truck contacts. First clean the round surface where contacts are made with the leaf springs. Next clean out the pockets. To clean out the pockets I place a round wood toothpick into the chuck of my hobby drill. I dip the end of the toothpick into polishing rouge. Polishing rouge can be obtained from Dremel and other sources. I then run the drill at speeds of 5-20 KRpm and apply moderate pressure when inserted into the pockets. Use the sharp end to do the bottom of the pockets and then when toothpick becomes dull clean the remaining surface of the pockets. The speed and pressure should not be so much as to cause the toothpick to char. See figure 09.



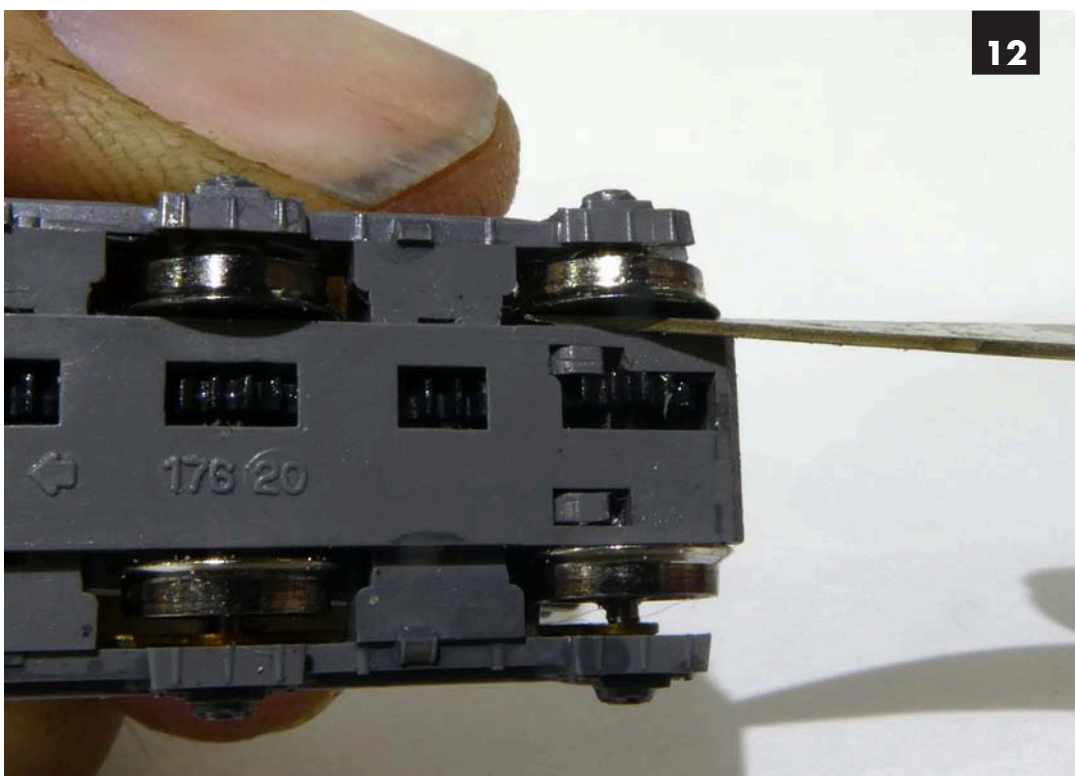
When finished, remove any traces of polishing rouge with a chemical solvent such as rubbing alcohol.

Now apply a light coating of No-ox-id A grease to the needle points of the wheel sets and to the contacting surfaces of the leaf springs. Re-assemble the trucks. Check for free-rolling characteristics of the trucks and redo the process until they are assembled and roll freely. Take this opportunity to make certain that all moving parts and gears are lubricated. The gears should have a little Teflon grease and the various gear axes bearings should have a tiny amount of plastic compatible oil.

Reinstall the leaf springs into the chassis and bend them downward to increase their contact pressure when the trucks are re-installed. **Figure 10.**



Install the trucks into the chassis making certain that the leaf springs all contact the points on the trucks. The last important step is to re-gauge the wheels using the NMRA gauge and an hobby knife to prod the wheels into gauge. See **figures 11 and 12.**



I have performed this procedure on many engines and now have a fleet that I consider switching certified. I am a member of a couple of operating session round robins. And we have had several sessions on my layout. I use a version of car cards, waybills and car orders and operate according to time table and train orders. The track work on my layout is about 1/4 complete at this point. The layout progress can be viewed at

<https://sward.smugmug.com/Model-Trains/BasementLayout>.

As an addendum I am now experimenting with another no-ox fluid that comes in oil form. There are two types of oil to this other system. The first is Deoxit shield S100L-2C and the second is Deoxit cleaner and shield D100L-2C. ▮

WHAT IF...?

AT&SF BLUE LINE

By Sandy Smith/ Images by author

01



Image 01. The 4567 (I know not the most original number) has been spotted at the station waiting for passengers for the overnight trip.

In late 1970 the Santa Fe Railroad president, John S. Reed was feeling reluctant to move his beloved passenger operations into Amtrak in May 1971. The Super Chief, El Capitan, Grand Canyon all had a deep seated position as the prime image of the entire railroad. The Santa Fe had continued to maintain the high service levels but also the rolling stock as if they were going to continue forever in the rail passenger business despite the financial losses being incurred. It was just a matter of pride for the company. Many other roads seeing what was on the horizon just made do until they could turn over their equipment to Amtrak. There were other railroads that did not join Amtrak at its inception, Southern, Rio Grande and Rock Island for different reasons. Southern had Graham Clayton that kept the Crescent running, Rio Grande the renamed their portion of the California Zephyr to Rio Grande Zephyr again for a sense of pride for both lines. Rock Island could not afford the financial cost of entry into Amtrak.

What if John Reed said NO to Amtrak and kept the Super, El Cap and Texas Chief? What if the Air Traffic controllers strike had continued? What if the overnight/high speed package services had a foothold on the rails and not just through the air with Federal Express? Amtrak tried this as well with their Merchandise boxcar fleet tacked onto passenger trains in the 1990's

Being a cast iron Santa Fe fan, I think about all these things in my zeal to justifying operation of a Super Chief pulled by a pair

of GP-60's in red warbonnet paint.

One of the changes to air travel was advent of discount carriers. Santa Fe being a forward thinking company, they could have re-configured cars and adapt the marketing (in my little world) to capture traffic with their Blue Line series of "more affordable overnight travel." Linking city pairs with high volume that could be transited in 12-14 hours during the night. Santa Fe introduced the Blue Line trains. A little less of everything but the right price for occasional travelers as well as convenience for the business traveler with no overnight hotel stay at the destination the night before the day long meeting. The cars were not the standard Santa Fe gleaming stainless but a VIA-esque royal blue with a gold stripe. This scheme would look fine behind a ATSF blue/yellow line freight engine. This is not exactly original thinking, since the New York Central's 20th Century and Pennsylvania R.R. Broadway Limited and other trains that operated between New York and Chicago operated this kind of service. There were other operations between city pairs, for example Southern Pacific's Lark overnight between San Francisco and Los Angeles for example.

So how does this relate to N scale?

Being a cast iron Santa Fe freak I am totally in the sauce over N scale, have been since 1969.

Heck, I can't even spell H0...Enter the magnificently made Rapido Trains Panorama series of passenger cars. I acquired a second hand, undecorated one from N Scale Supply. The

slumber coach would be a perfect candidate for this Blue Line service. Besides that, I could not possibly take one of these cars and strip the paint off of them for such a project. A little disassembly of the chassis and I had the car apart in no time, even though the previous owner had applied some super glue. Problem, the batteries in the roof section were completely depleted and corroded. This required some surgery to extract the button cells and not further damage the Easy Peasy lighting. I painted the interior surfaces with some tan to give it a bit of dimension when looking in with the lighting activated.

I airbrushed a coat of dark blue to the sides and painted the underside of the car and roof panel in aircraft instrument panel black, just to give it a touch less of full black. A shot of rattle can Glosscote prior to applying the Micro-Scale 1/8" gold striping, since my precision painting/masking is less than adequate. The white lettering was left over from some other project. Weathering of grungy brown on the trucks, under car equipment sides and roof gave it that not quite perfect appearance. I applied DullCote and reassembled the car. Just as a personal preference I never apply DullCote to the trucks.



Image 02. 4567 is on the west side of the station near the cab stand.



Image 03. 4567 is waiting to be spotted at the passenger car commissary prior to its nightly run.



Image 04. Blue Line train 198 is departing the east station lead tracks passing under Roosevelt Rd. Bridge. ▶

TRAVEL GUIDE N EVENTS

2022 SEP 10-11 UK Altoona
2022 International N Gauge Show at Warwickshire Event Centre, Nr Leamington Spa
Visit: www.ngaugeshow.co.uk

2022 SEP 16-18 PA Altoona
The 2022 N-Scale Weekend™ at the Blair County Convention Center. Visit: [HTTPS://WWW.N-SCALEWEEKEND.COM/ABOUT-THE-SHOW](https://www.n-scaleweekend.com/about-the-show)

2023 FEB 25-26 WA Monroe. The United NorthWest Model Railroad Club's 2023 Washington State Model Railroad Show and Marketplace in Monroe, Washington Fairgrounds.

2023 JUN ??-?? NV Sparks/ Reno area.
29th Annual National N Scale Convention. ▶

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ScaleTrains. All new "Rivet Counter" EMD SD40-2! A lot of insane prototype correct variations are planned. The first batch: Order by July 11, 2022 with delivery expected January 31, 2023. See page 17 and www.ScaleTrains.com.

Winter 2022/2023 should see an all-new Thrall- Trinity 42' Coil Steel Car.

ScaleTrains purchased Fox Valley Models' original tooling and owner Matt Gaudynski is now ScaleTrains full time Senior Product Developer. ScaleTrains' first FVM releases will be the GE ES-44s (with new details added) and the Trinity RE-4 coal hopper.

Fox Valley Models. The lines FVM purchased (Red Caboose, Deluxe Innovations, etc) will become part of Des Plaines Hobbies's new Scale America brand.

Rapido. An all-new RTL Turboliner! This will be another amazing train from Rapido with detailed interior and 3rd rail shoes on the trucks. Every wheel will be pick up. Amtrak PH III early, Amtrak PH III late, and Amtrak PH V. All with extra coaches. The project is conditional and has to have enough preorders, but if you order through a retailer or direct before September 15, one can earn a 5% off.

Micro-Trains Line. New tooling: PS-2 2-bay covered hopper. See page 04.

RailSmith. On top of the new 12-4 Western Sleeper, an all-new full diner should be out soon. There should be several variations plus skirted and unskirted. The plan is to have a diner for every roadname RailSmith has offered. ▶

SEE YOU NEXT ISSUE!