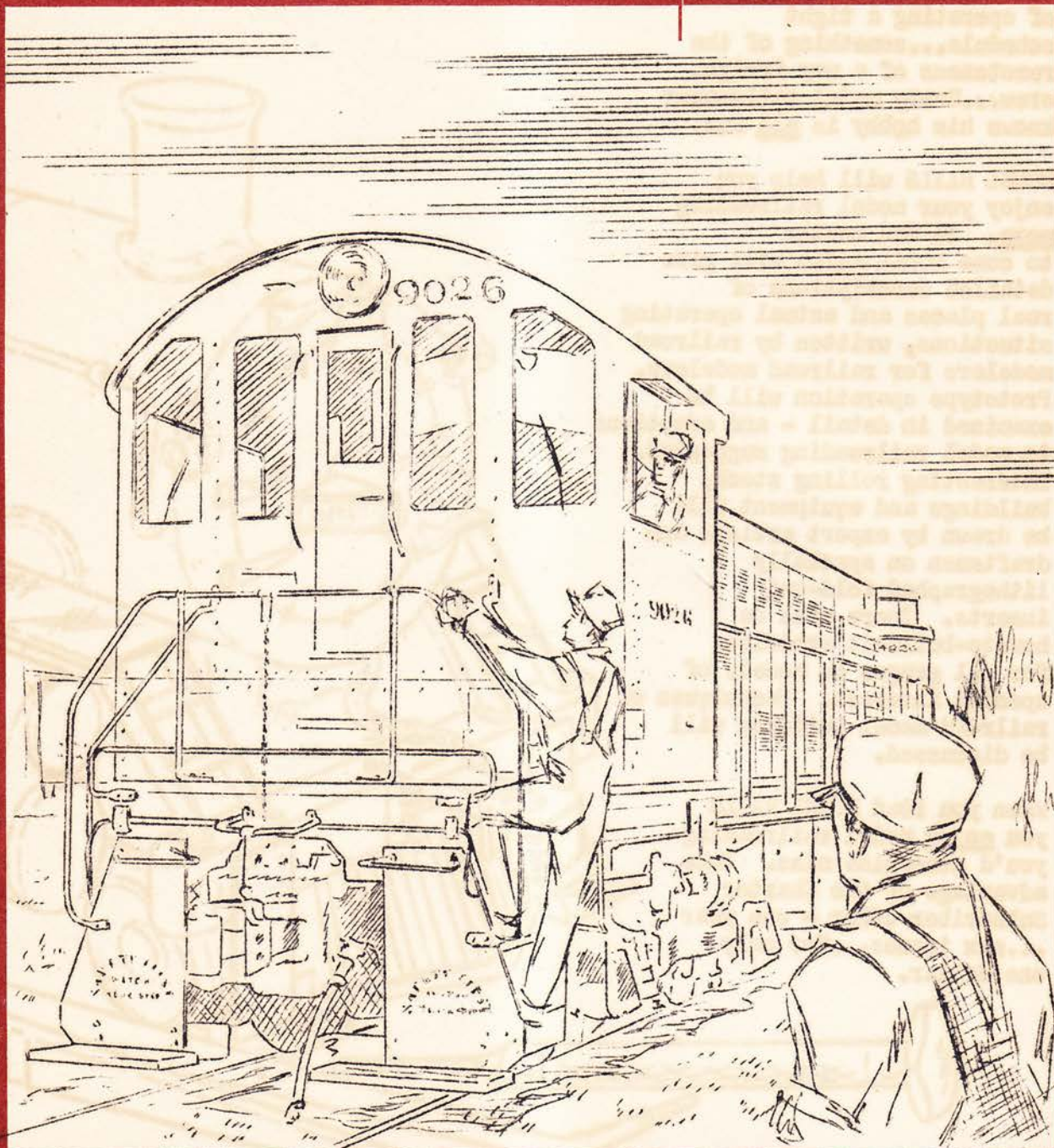


MODEL RAILS

JANUARY 1958

VOL. I NO. 1

1st Issue!



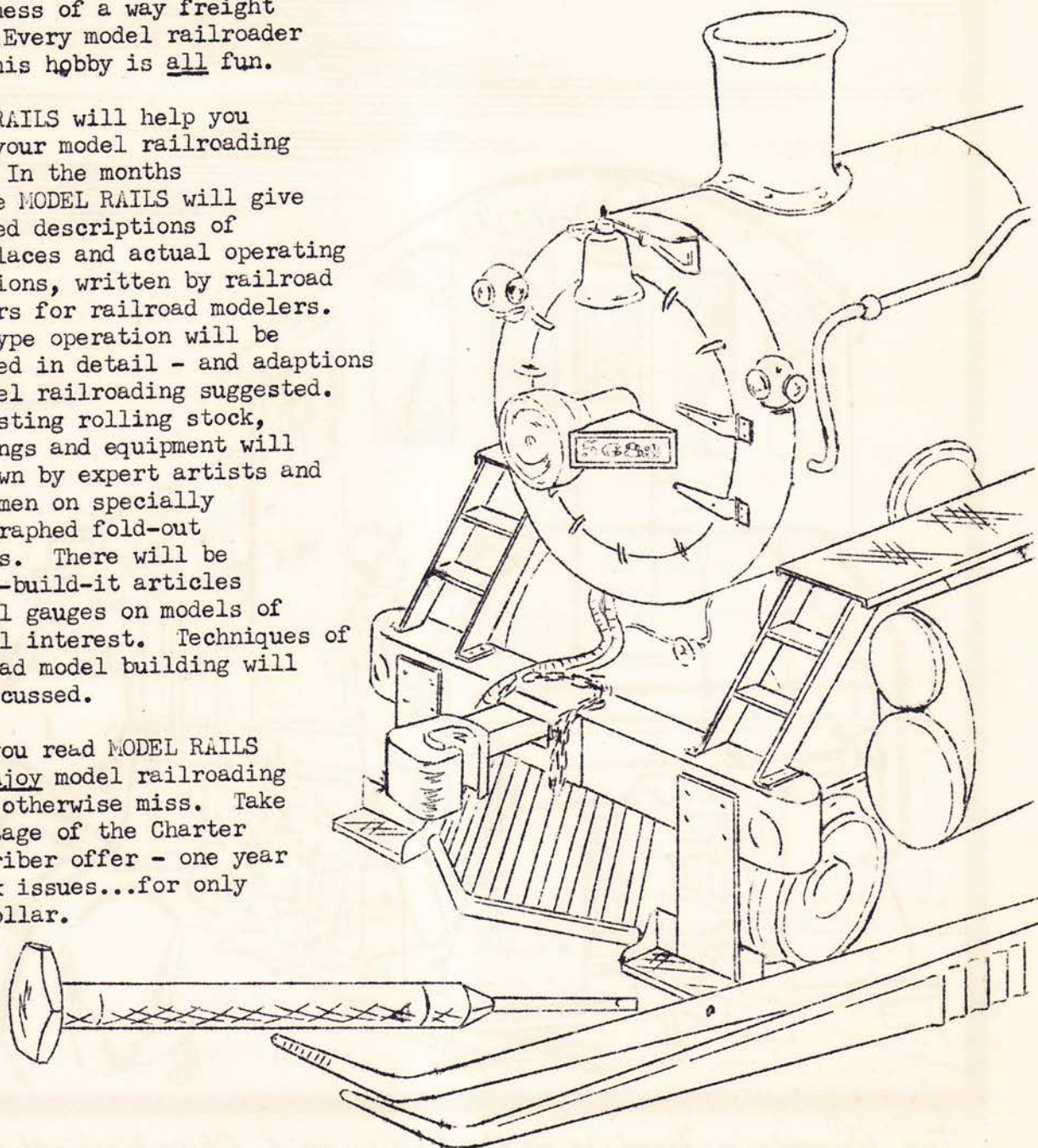
The Georgetown Terminus of the Baltimore & Ohio-Washington, D.C...Pg 5

IT'S ALL FUN!

Every model railroader knows the good feeling of achievement that comes with building a fine model...the excitement of operating a tight schedule...something of the remoteness of a way freight crew...Every model railroader knows his hobby is all fun.

MODEL RAILS will help you enjoy your model railroading more. In the months to come MODEL RAILS will give detailed descriptions of real places and actual operating situations, written by railroad modelers for railroad modelers. Prototype operation will be examined in detail - and adaptations to model railroading suggested. Interesting rolling stock, buildings and equipment will be drawn by expert artists and draftsmen on specially lithographed fold-out inserts. There will be how-to-build-it articles for all gauges on models of special interest. Techniques of railroad model building will be discussed.

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JANUARY 1958

VOL. 1 NO. 1

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Published six times a year by Model Rails, Box 425, Arlington 10, Va. George Connell, Publisher. Subscription price \$1.50 per year. Individual issues 25c per copy. Publisher does not solicit manuscripts at this time and assumes no responsibility for manuscripts or artwork submitted, although reasonable care will be taken. Entire contents copyright 1957, reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is strictly prohibited.

EVERY PUBLICATION makes its bow with a feeling of apprehension behind the scenes. MODEL RAILS is no exception.

All that the staff can say at this stage is that we hope you like our work, and we'll be working hard to always improve our little magazine and to serve our readers.

While MODEL RAILS is still in the formative stage, and its editorial style and content is in something of a state of flux, it will be staff written.

For this reason the publisher requests that no manuscripts be submitted for consideration at this time.

Since we don't know ourselves what we have to offer to prospective advertisers, MODEL RAILS will not print advertising for at least the first six issues.

To develop MODEL RAILS into the magazine our subscribers will like most requires your help.

The editor looks forward to reading your comments, suggestions and criticisms; and guarantees that they all will be read, noted and carefully considered.

OS

The Norfolk and Western, a good friend of railfans, is offering a beautifully printed book of absolutely spectacular night photographs of steam locomotives in action called "Night Trick".

Photos are by New York industrial photographer and railroad enthusiast O. Winston Link.

For a copy, free of charge, write to the Magazine and Advertising Dept., Norfolk and Western Railway, General Office Building, Roanoke, Virginia.

And when you travel on the Norfolk and Western look for another spectacular item that's even bigger than Cinerama. It's locally called a Type A.

With the widespread availability of 12v automobile batteries a question has come up here at MODEL RAILS. Do many model railroaders use storage batteries for

a power source?

The editor has material on hand which is the last word on battery care, and if enough subscribers would find it useful an article will be forthcoming.

Let's have a show of hands.

If you should decide to build a water-front railroad, such as the Georgetown Terminus, you'll be interested in a new HO tug, the Taurus, designed by Charles Fox and sold by Model Shipways, 39 W. Fort Lee Rd., Bogota, N.J.

The price for the kit, with a machine carved hull and cabin is \$3.95. The model is 8 3/4" long, and its prototype is an East Coast tug of about 1900.

For a super detail touch on kit built box cars, cement in a thin, floor sized, pre painted, piece of bristol board scribed to represent floor boards as you are building the car.

A piece of thin Northeastern wood is fine too.

Add a few blocks for crates and you open the sliding door on something really de-luxe.

Next Issue

A Highly Detailed HO Caboose

An interesting kit with especially good metal castings for a transitional brace-side caboose is offered by M. Dale Newton. MODEL RAILS is going to detail this kit and add a period interior.

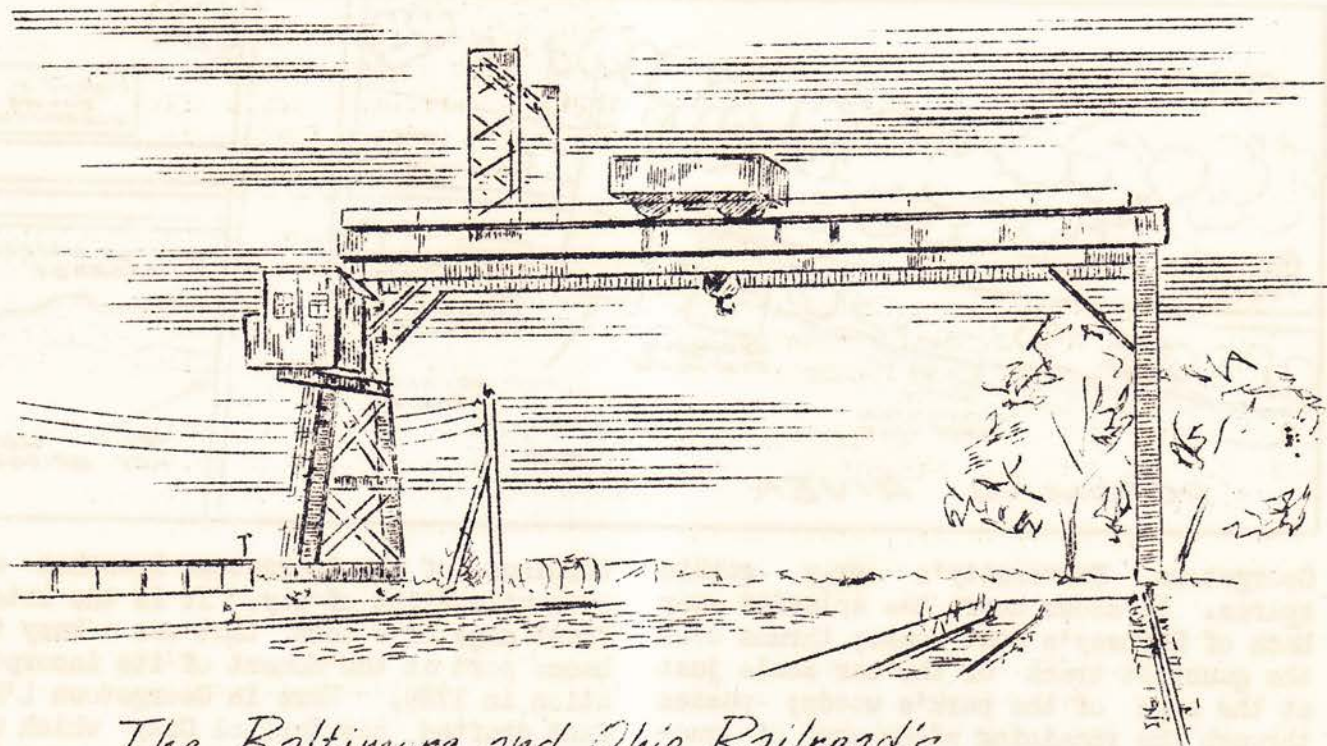
Operating A Freight Only Short Line

A dispatcher for the Washington and Old Dominion in Northern Virginia tells all about car movements on his line, from interchange to unloading and back again. Must reading for realistic short line operation.

Bluemont Junction

The track at the only junction on the Washington and Old Dominion R.R. is diagrammed. Incorporated is storage track, a wye and storage facilities for work train cars.

... and other special features



The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad's **GEORGETOWN TERMINUS**

This nicely designed end of a branch line adapts well to a point-to-point layout and is worth study for the efficient and space wise layout of its track components.

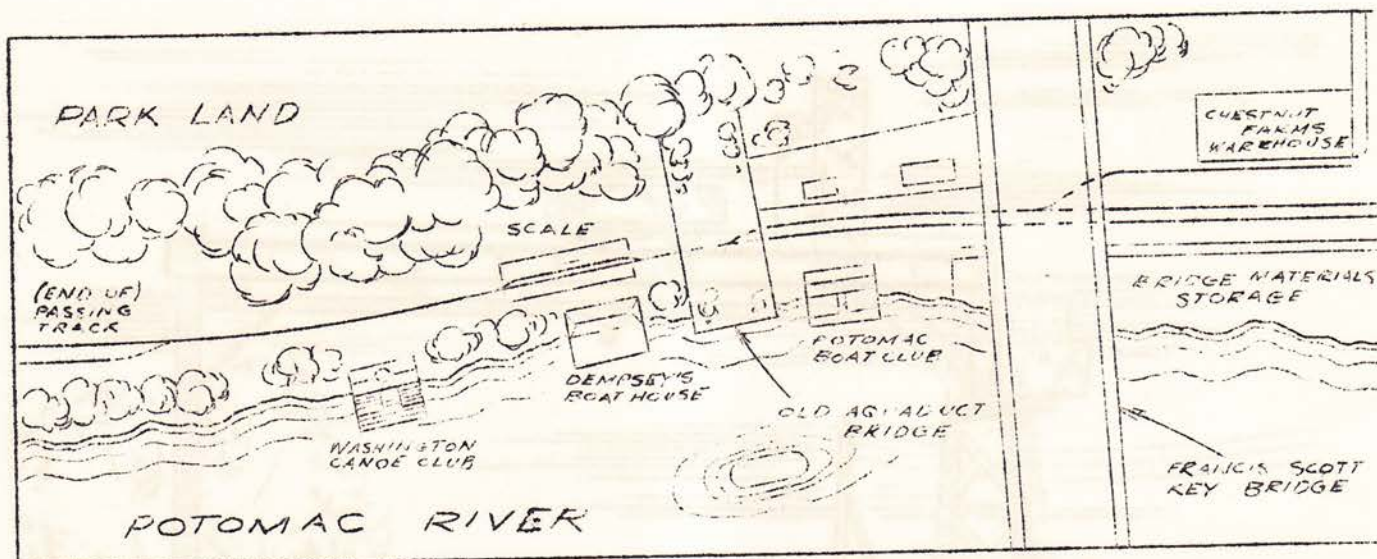
Within sight of the gleaming Washington Monument, in our Federal City, on the shore of George Washington's "beautiful Potomac" itself, is as exciting a segment of metropolitan railroading as is to be seen by a gratified model enthusiast.

America's first common carrier, the Baltimore and Ohio, has a turnout near Railroad Avenue between Michigan and Kansas Avenues in that Montgomery County suburb of Washington, D.C. known as Silver Spring. Here is Georgetown Junction, start of the Georgetown Branch. The B&O's busy main line from St. Louis, Mo.; Chicago; and Springfield, Ill. hurries on to the Capitol's handsome, fifty year old Union Station; to the great Potomac Yards

near Alexandria, Va.; and north to Baltimore; Philadelphia; and New York.

From Georgetown Junction the single track branch undulates across suburban Bethesda in a southwesterly direction toward the blue gray Potomac River's sloping bank. At the border of the District of Columbia it veers southeast, crosses the historic masonry of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and follows shaded, tree lined river shore land lovingly protected by Federal stewardship.

Growling along under the riverbank trees a train on this little freight only line clatters over a train length passing siding; past the genteel dilapidation of the Washington Canoe Club and along the steep, honeysuckle laden bank far below

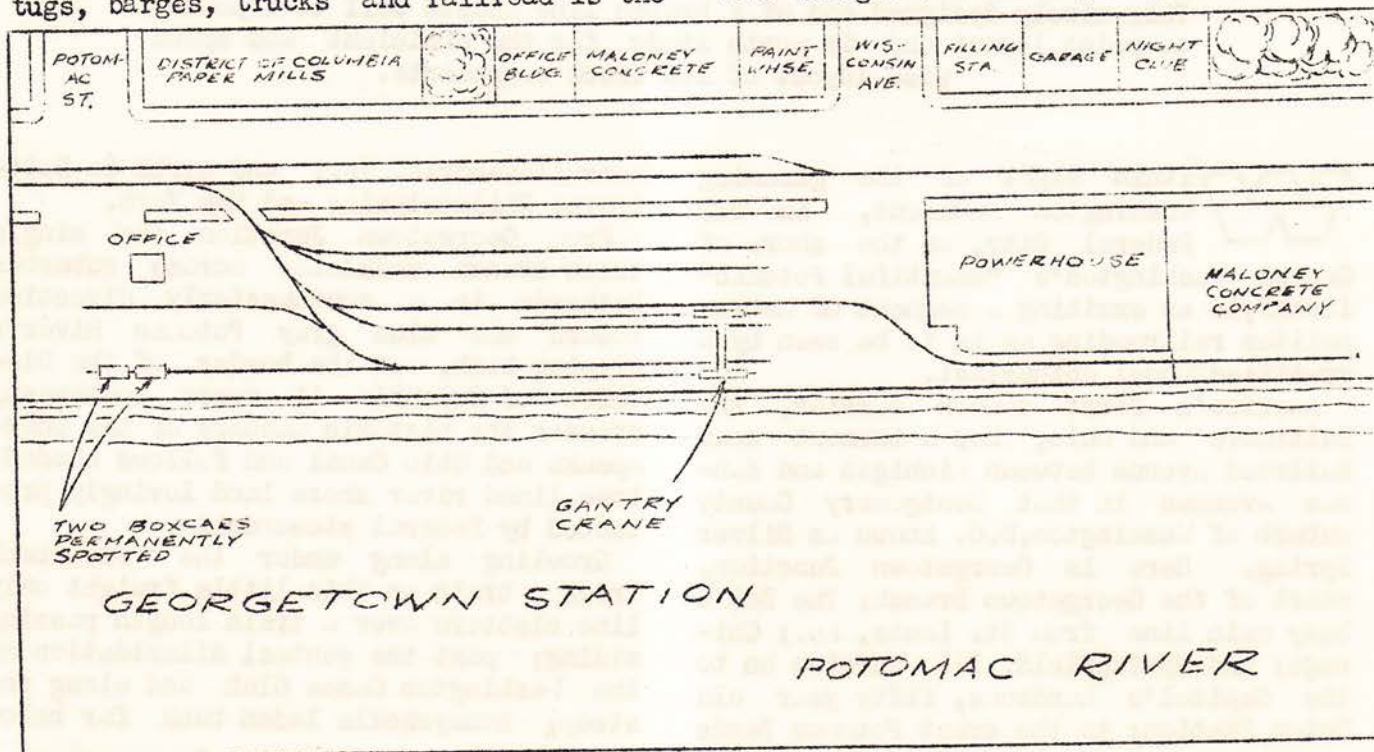


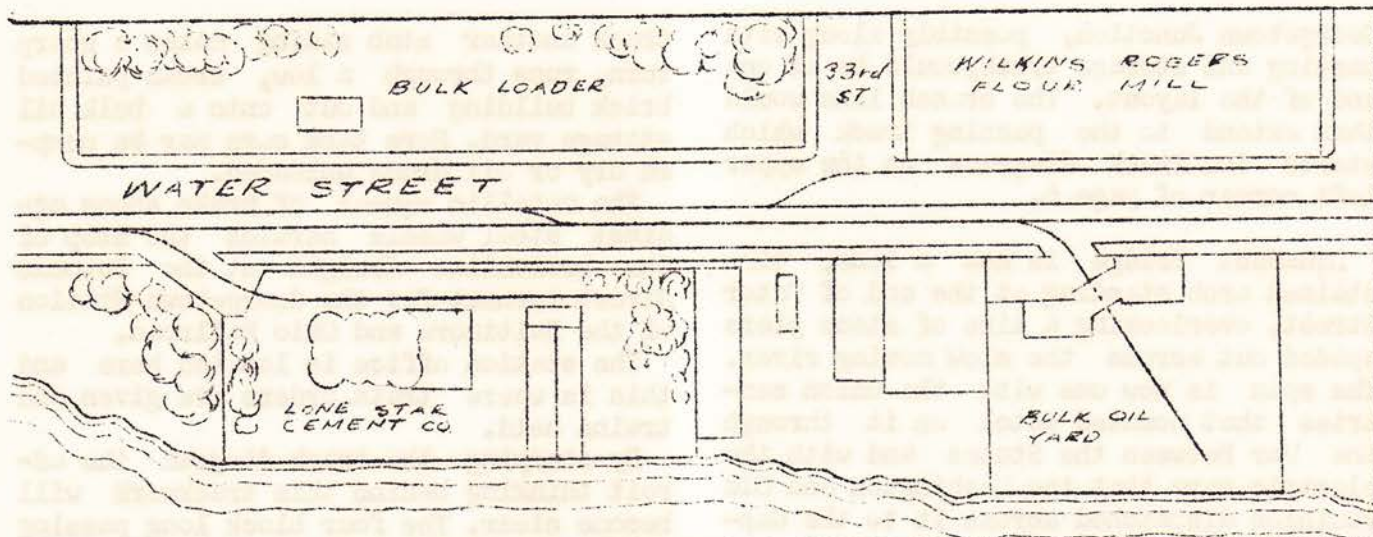
Georgetown University's gray gothic spires. It slows near the splendid sway back of Dempsey's Boat House; thrums over the gauntlet track of the car scale just at the edge of the park's woods; passes through the remaining stone arch of aquaduct Bridge and - in an instantaneous change of terrain that will delight the heart of every space short railroad modeler - emerges from the bucolic amid the grimy heavy industry of a city waterfront...running right down the center of Water Street!

This metropolitan cityscape of factories and warehouses; brick and pavement; tugs, barges, trucks and railroad is the

terminus of the Georgetown Branches eleven mile right of way. It is the waterfront edge of a town that was a busy tobacco port at the moment of its incorporation in 1789. Here in Georgetown L'Enfant drafted his Capitol City which was one day to swallow up the very port itself.

To the student of the scale model railroad this nicely designed branch line terminus is a prototype configuration of outstanding interest. And if a point-to-point shelf or around-the-wall type of switching railroad is under development the Georgetown trackage might well provide thought stimulating inspiration. The



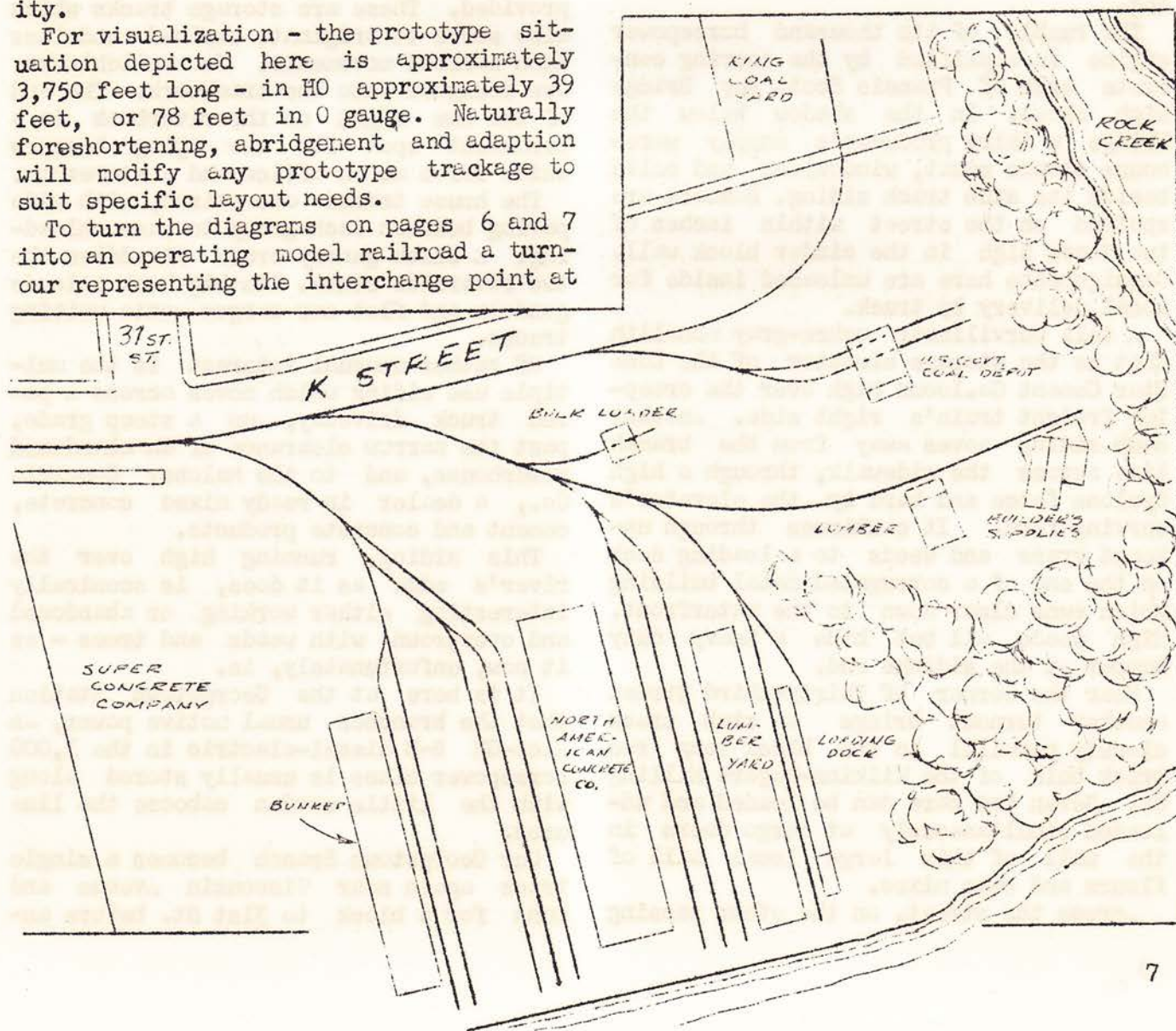


scenic natural boundaries of the Potomac River and the steep river bank and building fronts combine to form a long narrow strip which can be routed along a wall or bent around a room with exceeding fidelity.

For visualization - the prototype situation depicted here is approximately 3,750 feet long - in HO approximately 39 feet, or 78 feet in O gauge. Naturally foreshortening, abridgement and adaption will modify any prototype trackage to suit specific layout needs.

To turn the diagrams on pages 6 and 7 into an operating model railroad a turn-out representing the interchange point at

ABOVE AND BELOW: From left to right, top to bottom, the Georgetown trackage is completely diagrammed. The drawings are not to scale, and are somewhat foreshortened.



Georgetown Junction, possibly along with passing and storage track, would be at one end of the layout. The branch line would then extend to the passing track which starts the track diagrams on the upper left corner of page 6.

Aqueduct Bridge is now a lone, time stained arch standing at the end of Water Street, overlooking a line of stone piers spaced out across the slow moving river. The span is now one with the Union sentries that mounted watch on it through the War Between the States and with the electric cars that the Washington and Old Dominion dispatched across it to the Capitol close after the century's turn.

Once on Water Street the crawling Alco switcher has left ties and spikes behind for the poured concrete of a city street, and under Aqueduct bridge's arch it has moved onto a four block long passing siding.

The rumble of its thousand horsepower engine is amplified by the soaring concrete arch of Francis Scott Key Bridge high above. In the shadow below the bridge a dairy producer's supply warehouse stands squat, windowless and solid beside its stub track siding. Boxcars are spotted on the street within inches of two doors high in the cinder block wall. Consignments here are unloaded inside for local delivery by truck.

A tall curvilinear ochre-gray monolith that is the storage elevator of the Lone Star Cement Co. looms high over the creeping freight train's right side. Another stub siding moves away from the branch line across the sidewalk, through a high Cyclone fence and hard by the elevator's curving form. It continues through unkempt grass and weeds to a loading dock on the end of a corrugated metal building which runs clear down to the waterfront. High weeds all but hide a heavy duty bumper at the sidings end.

Near the corner of Thirty-third Street another turnout brings a stub track closely parallel to the block long red brick bulk of the Wilkins-Rogers Milling Co. Seven box cars can be loaded and unloaded simultaneously at cargo doors in the wall of this large local mill of flours and cake mixes.

Across the street, on the other passing

track another stub siding makes a sharp turn, runs through a low, cream painted brick building and out onto a bulk oil storage yard. Here tank cars may be pumped dry or oil drums unloaded.

The metallic squeal of brake shoes against steel wheels heralds the stop of the branchline freight at the Potomac Street turnout for the Georgetown Station of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

The station office is located here and this is where train orders are given and trains held.

By studying the track diagram the adroit thinking behind this trackwork will become clear. The four block long passing siding running down the center of the street is a basic need for a station. With it any eventuality of passing or holding trains can be met.

Between the street and the waterfront several single ended house tracks are provided. These are storage tracks which also serve to originate carload and less than carload movements. Two switchbacks are designed into the trackwork. The end of the one right on the riverbank is a permanent spot for two aging boxcars which serve as an office and a storeroom.

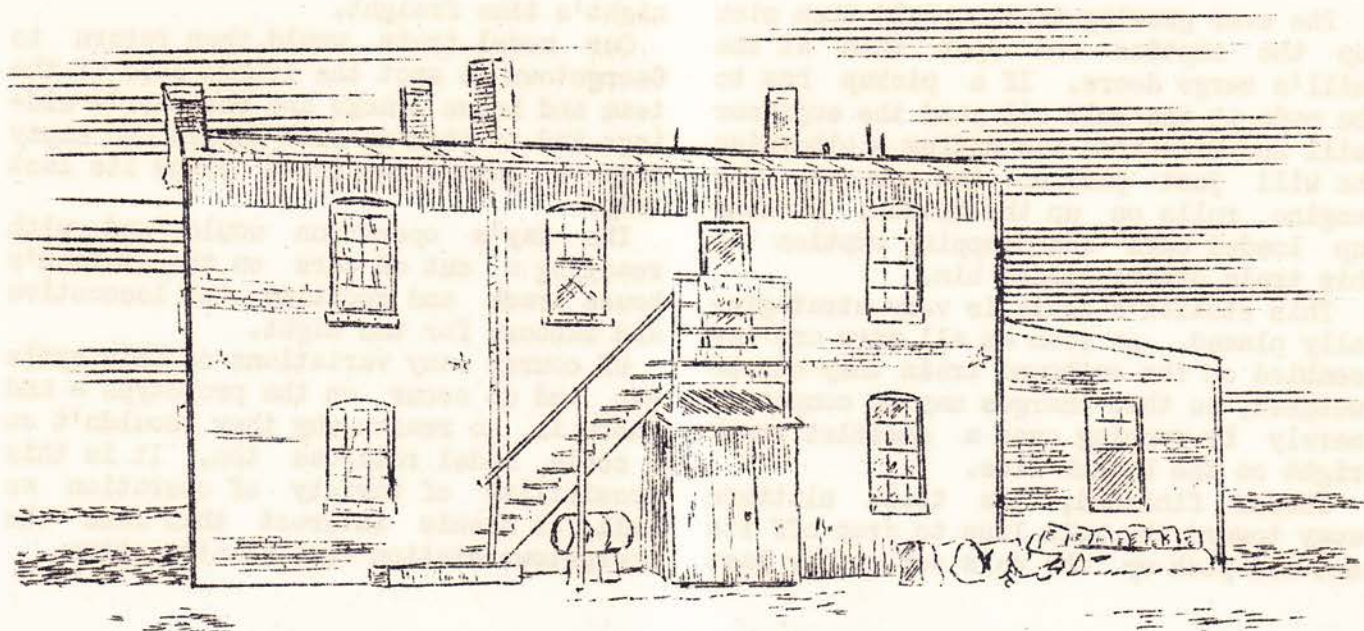
The house tracks are paired, with wide paving between each group to ease unloading. A black gantry crane straddles the two riverside stubs. Its big hook unloads gondola and flat car cargos onto waiting trucks.

Of rather unusual interest is the multiple use siding which moves across a paved truck driveway, up a steep grade, past the narrow clearance of an abandoned powerhouse, and to the Maloney Concrete Co., a dealer in ready mixed concrete, cement and concrete products.

This siding, running high over the river's edge as it does, is scenically interesting either working or abandoned and overgrown with weeds and trees - as it now, unfortunately, is.

It is here at the Georgetown Station that the branches usual motive power, an Alco-GE B-B diesel-electric in the 1,000 horsepower class is usually stored along with the little wooden caboose the line uses.

Our Georgetown Branch becomes a single track again near Wisconsin Avenue and runs for a block to 31st St. before an-



other turnout is seen. Here, between 31st and 30th streets on what is now named K street instead of Water St. is where the turnouts to the Georgetown Team Tracks are intermixed with those of industrial sidings. This complex of stub tracks accommodates covered hoppers that service the Super Concrete Company's bunkers and the North American Concrete Corp. The W.T. Galleher & Brother Inc. lumber and millwork firm shares a siding with the Potomac Builder's Supply Co.

Modelers will like an extra fillip in service the Baltimore and Ohio provides shippers here. It is a short stub with a spanking new, silver, railroad owned bulk loader.

Near the end of the branch, the last turnout runs hoppers into an immaculate concrete U.S. Government building where they are emptied. From here coal is delivered by truck to local Federal buildings.

The Georgetown Branch itself ends as a siding in a coal yard near 30th street.

From the architectural point of view our prototype's structural styles range from the red brick of post Civil War building to the concrete of the twenties and thirties, to the cinder blocks of today. A concrete and steel freeway; easily disregarded by model builders, praise be; runs over most of its length.

Switching at the Georgetown terminus

involves a varied and archtypical assortment of rolling stock - an Alco 1,000hp switcher, a caboose, box, hopper, covered hopper, tank, gondola, flat and occasional heavy duty flat cars. Every once in a while a section crew in a gasoline car repairs the right-of-way, and a special comes through to clean weeds off the berm.

There is no wye near the Georgetown terminus- box cars have to load on either side and the locomotive heads in and backs out. The two switchbacks at the Georgetown Station can make for some interesting tricks.

Operating a model Georgetown Branch terminus would possibly work like this: First thing in the morning, hours before the start of a business day, our freight conductor would pick up his train orders at the Georgetown station master's neat little brick building. The Alco switcher would start up and head down K street to pick up any cars ready to move from down at the end of the line.

Freight cars in tow the switcher would growl back up to the station to pick up a cut set out the night before with empties and caboose at the end. Then it would head back onto the branch. Opposite the Wilking Rogers plant the train would drop any empties marked for the plant. It would then change tracks just beyond thirty-third street and fish out loads.

The ever growing train would then pick up the empties and spot them at the mill's cargo doors. If a pickup has to be made at the bulk oil yard the engineer will now back into its siding - otherwise he will just pick up the caboose. The engine rolls on up the branch, picking up loaded cars and dropping empties as his train orders direct him.

This station's scale is very strategically placed. As soon as all cars are assembled on the outbound train they can be weighed, so that charges may be computed, merely by running over a gauntlet track right on the branch line.

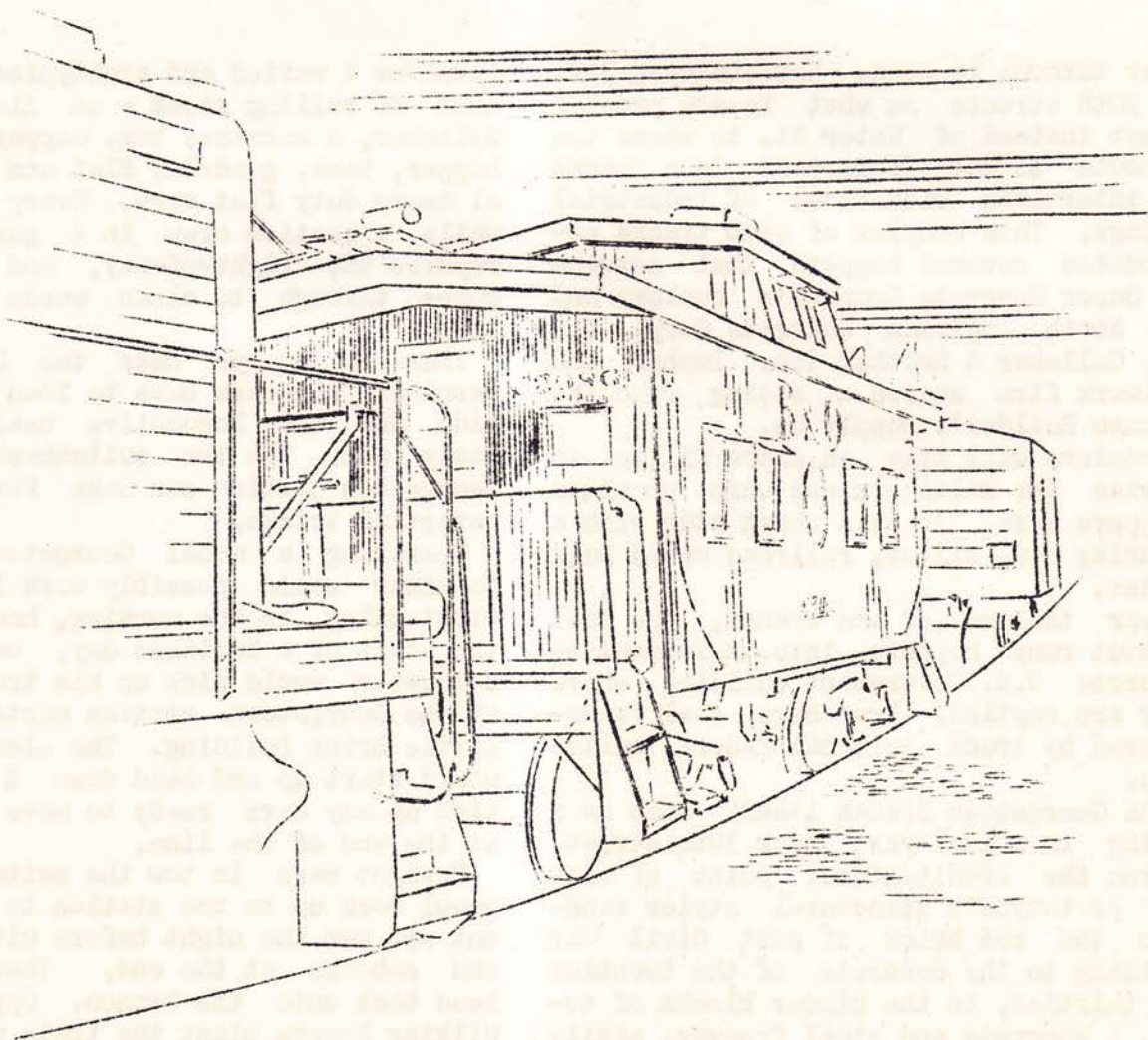
Chores finished, the train clatters away toward the main line to drop off its cut and pick up the cars set out by last

night's time freight.

Our model train would then return to Georgetown to spot the loaded cars at the team and house tracks and customer's sidings and to pick up such loaded and empty cars as have accumulated since its last trip.

The day's operation would end with readying a cut of cars on the station's house track and spotting the locomotive and caboose for the night.

Of course many variations on this cycle can and do occur on the prototype - and there is no reason why they shouldn't on a scale model railroad too. It is this possibility of variety of operation as well as scenic interest that make the Georgetown station area so attractive.



BRUSH PAINTING SMALL CASTINGS

Such tiny details as human figures, animals and baggage wagons are best painted by brush. Here is how to go about it.

by Jerry Pooke

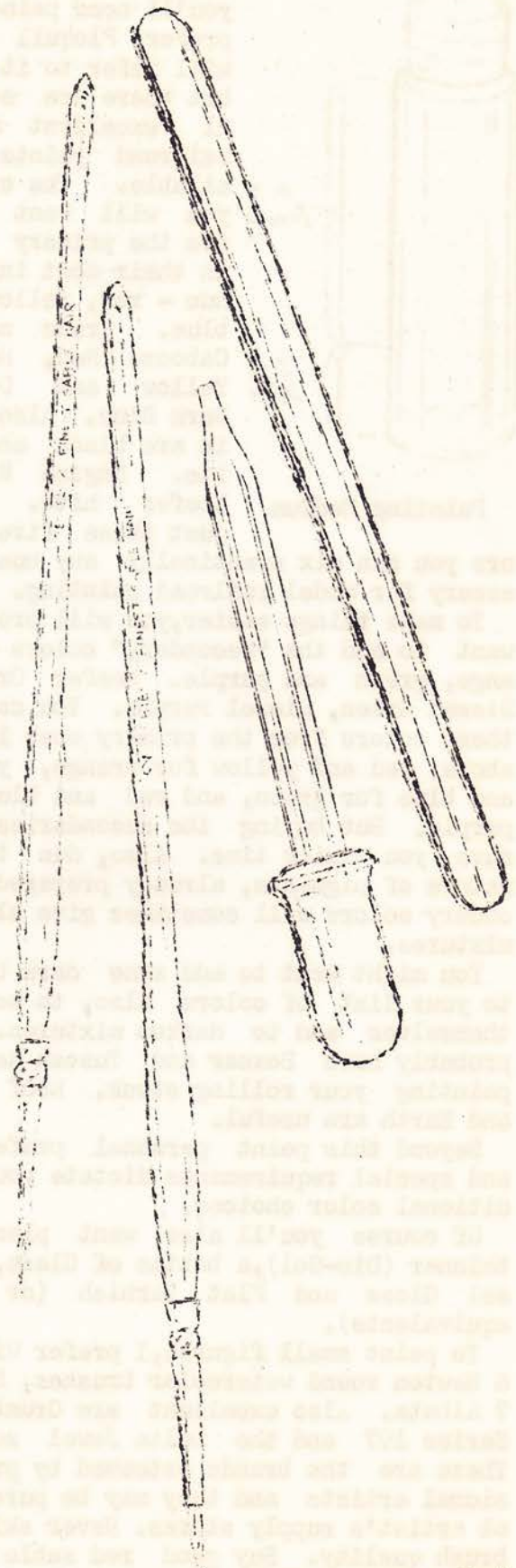
It's doubtful anybody has attempted to paint the blue stripes on an engineer's hat yet, but painting scale mustaches and sideburns on your passengers is a cinch.

It's only a question of good paint manipulation. The right approach to painting will help you achieve amazing realism that will make your model railroading a visual pleasure.

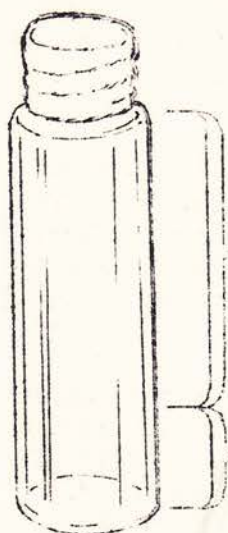
And since, as model railroaders, we are absorbed with a permeating illusion of reality; minutiae is as vital to our scaled down world as careful basic layout.

Such tiny details as cast metal human figures, animals, station benches and baggage wagons, mail boxes and fire hydrants are all best painted by brush, the most basic painting technique of all.

Really effective brush painting is more than a finishing touch. Indeed, it's an important step in your model building. However - proper surface preparation, correct procedure and good materials are the only prerequisites to a very satisfying paint job. Not one of them presents a formidable problem.



Basic Painting Tools



Painting Medium

First, of course, you'll need paint. I prefer Floquil and will refer to it here but there are several excellent model railroad paints available. The colors you will want most are the primary ones in their most intense hue - red, yellow and blue. Trade named: Caboose Red, Reefer Yellow and Diesel Dark Blue. Also basic are black and white. Engine Black, Reefer White. With just these five col-

ors you can mix practically any hue necessary for model railroad painting.

To make things easier, you will probably want to add the "secondary" colors - orange, green and purple. Reefer Orange, Diesel Green, Diesel Purple. You can mix these colors from the primary ones listed above; red and yellow for orange, yellow and blue for green, and red and blue for purple. But buying the secondaries will save you mixing time. Also, due to the nature of pigments, already prepared secondary colors will sometimes give clearer mixtures.

You might want to add some dark browns to your list of colors also, to use by themselves and to darken mixtures. You probably have Boxcar and Tuscan Red for painting your rolling stock. Roof Brown and Earth are useful.

Beyond this point personal preference and special requirements dictate your additional color choices.

Of course you'll also want plenty of thinner (Dio-Sol), a bottle of Glaze, Diesel Gloss and Flat Varnish (or their equivalents).

To paint small figures, I prefer Windsor & Newton round watercolor brushes, Series 7 Albata. Also excellent are Grumbacher Series 197 and the Delta Jewel series. These are the brands esteemed by professional artists and they may be purchased at artist's supply stores. Never skimp on brush quality. Buy good red sable ones, take care of them and they'll last for

years. Sizes 0, 1, & 2 are well adapted to painting small detail.

A laboratory supply house will supply a box of a dozen medicine droppers for about a quarter. Your drug store can also probably help you. These are important for mixing small quantities of color. They make accurate measuring possible and save paint. Procure the straight form shown in the illustration.

The laboratory supplier can also sell you inexpensive vials like the one illustrated for holding and storing special mixtures of color.

For mixing colors, a palette is essential. A square piece of milk glass is very good. An inexpensive white china dish with a flattish contour and no decorative flutings is very servicable. An artist's white porcelain slab is also acceptable.

Clean white rags are generally useful and pipe cleaners are just the thing for cleaning out your droppers. Flat sticks like the one illustrated are perfect for thoroughly mixing paints.

You should have an infra-red bulb to "bake" your painting on metal. I prefer an etched metal surface as a ground for painting and recommend it. For this procure your favorite etching chemical. Automotive non-ferrous etching compound and white vinegar are both popular. Just immerse your casting until it is lightly etched. Then wash it with clear water.

There are a few other odds and ends that are handy, and we'll mention them along with their uses as we go along.

To begin painting, let's assume you have a cast zamac or type metal figure trimmed of flash, bent to the position you want, etched or primed, and clean - all ready for painting. Tack cementing it onto the end of a short piece of dowel or stick gives you a convenient handle and a base for setting it down on. Keep your fingers off the figure itself as much as possible.

Arrange your bottled colors in orderly progression: yellow, orange, red, purple, blue, green, reddish browns, dark browns, black and white.

Prepare a bottle of medium by mixing; in a clean, empty bottle with a good air tight cap, approximately 80% Dio-Sol and

20% Glaze. This is what you will use to keep your paints moist and workable with. The small vials or Floquil mixing bottles are excellent for this use. Also have a bottle of thinner on hand for cleaning droppers and brushes.

Before you, you will also want a good color photograph - taken in clear colorless light - of the type of subject you are about to paint. This can be clipped from a magazine.

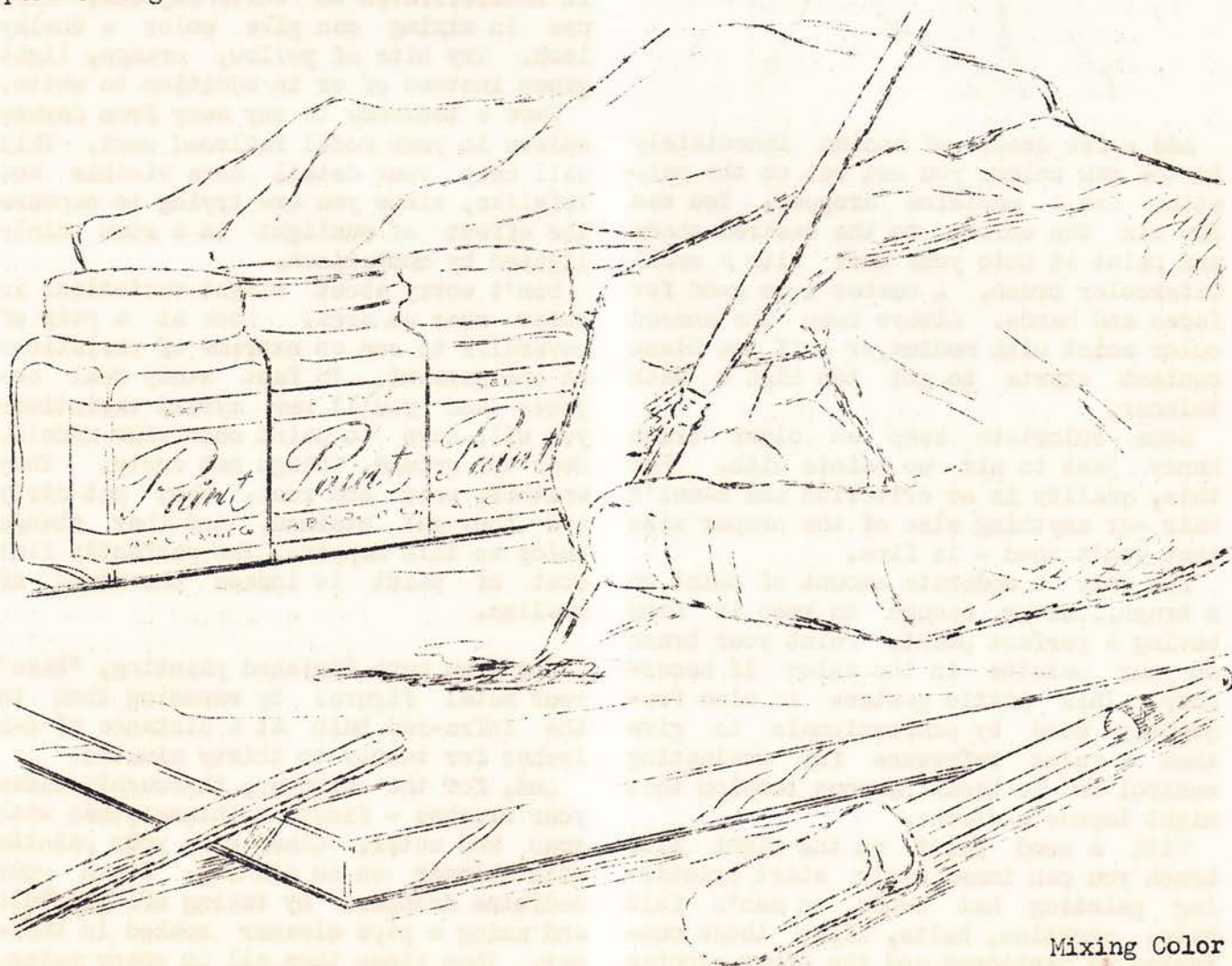
I usually start painting human figures with the face and hands. A good basic flesh formula is this: Reefer White, Boxcar Red or Tuscan Red mixed to get the approximate basic color; a bit of Reefer Yellow to warm up the skin color, and tiny amounts of Diesel Light Blue or Diesel Dark Blue and Earth to achieve the final natural appearance.

The entire range of flesh tones, from pale to deep tan, can be achieved by experimenting with various amounts of each

color. You can check the accuracy of your mixture by putting a tiny dot of it on your clipping and seeing how it matches. Of course, a perfect match is highly unnecessary. Flesh varies from sallow to swarthy in color.

It is good practise to keep your jars of paint closed. This keeps air away from the volatile lacquer and makes an accident less likely. To use the paint I stir it thoroughly with a clean stick or one that I have previously used in the same color.

For cast figures enough paint usually adheres to the mixing stick to supply the amount one needs. Just let it drip off the end onto the palette or mixing dish. Larger amounts are handled with a dropper which is immediately cleaned in thinner by pressing the bulb a few times. This does not clean it perfectly, but it takes away the excess paint which may clog it and contaminate other colors.



Mixing Color

Method of Painting



Add a few drops of medium immediately to the raw colors you set out on the palette. Use a medicine dropper. You can now mix the colors to the desired shade and paint it onto your work with a small watercolor brush. A number 1 is good for faces and hands. Always keep the unused color moist with medium, or - if the Glaze content starts to get too high - with thinner.

Some colorists keep an older brush handy just to mix up paints with. For this, quality is no criterion and camel's hair - or anything else of the proper size that won't shed - is fine.

Use only a moderate amount of paint on a brush...never enough to keep it from having a perfect point. Point your brush on your palette in the color if necessary. This little gesture is also frequently used by professionals to give them a quick reference for evaluating control and to break nervous tension that might impede a stroke.

With a good point on the right size brush you can immediately start practising painting hat bands on men's felt hats, neckties, belts, lips, those mustaches we mentioned, and the other minutae

commonly called "super detail" ...and it won't be one of those galling, frustrating jobs that you'd love to chuck.

Immediately after painting a passage, rinse your brush with thinner and point it on a rag.

Although color mixing is a trial and error process, it is an orderly procedure that can be learned by mastering a few basic concepts. Once you are familiar with the principles, practise and experience will quickly make you adept.

When you mix and tone colors always start with the lighter color and add dark shades to it. Use black sparingly, if at all. Rather, to darken a color use a dark brown or a dark blue...depending on your need for a "warm" (brown) or "cool" (blue) appearance or affinity for the color you are using.

Be cautious of white, by itself or in mixtures. There is seldom a pure white in nature...even on white objects. Over use in mixing can give color a chalky look. Try bits of yellow, orange, light green instead of or in addition to white.

Have a tendency to shy away from darker colors in your model railroad work. This will keep your detail more visible and lifelike, since you are trying to capture the effect of sunlight in a room dimly lighted by comparison.

Don't worry about slight variations in color over an area. Look at a pair of coveralls to see an extreme of variations on one garment. In fact study real objects and you'll see myriad variations you will have to paint onto your models. Near the ground, things get dusty. They weather, wear and rust. They get dirty and they get stained. And they change color as this happens. The perfectly flat coat of paint is indeed the enemy of realism.

When you have finished painting, "bake" your metal figures by exposing them to the infra-red bulb at a distance of 4-6 inches for twenty to thirty minutes.

And, for the wind-up, thoroughly clean your brushes - first in thinner, then with soap and water. Clean off your palette with thinner on an old rag. Clean your medicine droppers by taking off the bulb and using a pipe cleaner soaked in thinner. Then rinse them all in soapy water.

Starting with

HO READY-TO-RUN

There are a lot of desirable HO ready-to-run train sets for sale. Here are some things to consider before you buy your first one.

For the beginning model railroader, the ready-to-run HO train set might well be the best thing to happen to model railroading since the NMRA was formed. Now, with ready-to-run, it is at last practical to be an active, operating railroader from the very start of one's participation in our absorbing hobby.

This publication advocates what it will call, for lack of a generally accepted word, a "helical" pattern of participation in model railroading. In simple language this means having an operating nucleus of a model railroad from the very beginning, building out from it, and constantly adding more and more detail.

As a practical application of this concept, a model railroader's first train set should be a part of his ultimate model railroad. To do this takes some thought.

The revolution that railroading is undergoing today makes it inevitable that to be true to life every model railroad

has to be a "period" piece - even if the period is contemporary. And, there are so many well designed HO ready-to-run sets available that it is easy to start in almost any period from the Civil War to today's diesel and piggy-back age.

It's impossible to go into America's great and sprawling railroad history here but what you are confronted with is briefly this: In the 1860s (the Civil War period) the typical locomotive was the small, light, beautiful 4-4-0 American Standard. This was a wood burner with a balloon stack and fancy decoration. Cars were smaller, a box car being about 35 feet long, but recognizably similar to those used today. Passenger cars were shorter and lighter, had a characteristic open end, a radial or celestory roof, and usually four wheel wood beam trucks. This was an age of farming, dirt roads and small scale architecture.

The 1880s saw the beginning of modern

HO Gauge literally stands for Half O Gauge. It was introduced into the United States from Great Britain in about 1934, thus its metric scale of 3.5mm (about 9/64") to the foot.

HO Gauge is the most widely used by scale model railroaders in the United States. As a matter of practise almost all HO is 2 rail because of its' more realistic appearance.

Propulsion voltage of HO, according to National Model Railroad Association Standard S9, is 12 volts dc. Positive potential on the right hand rail, facing forward, shall produce forward motion.

HO ready-to-run train sets are built to the same standards as, and are interchangeable with, regular HO scale model kit built items.

railroading. The coal burner superseded the wood burner and locomotives assumed the silhouette we recognize today. At the present time this period isn't well represented in ready-to-run. Revell's U.P. 0-6-0T is the only notable ready-to-run example of this period's building.

The narrow vestibule passenger car was patented in 1887 and by 1890 the full width vestibule was to be seen. By 1910 the all metal passenger car was in general use.

From shortly after the turn of the century to the close of World War II was the period of standard railroading. Between 1910 and 1915 the locomotive we all remember with a valve chamber over the cylinder became typical. In 1925 the four wheel trailing truck was introduced. It is after the prototypes of this era that most steam outline ready-to-run is patterned, and only slight variations in detail can move many a locomotive from 1940 to 1910.

After about 1945 diesels became the thing. A modern railroad would typically be all diesel. Today's passenger trains consist of combinations of standard and "washboard" cars. What may be a twilight development in the passenger business, the "Aerotrain" (of the minimal seating and box lunch) is now to be seen.

An up to the minute trunk line would now be dabbling in piggy back freight.

Locomotive for locomotive, a switcher offers the most operation and would be a good first choice. The 0-6-0 was the type most used by steam railroads. It is prototypical to operate a switcher for limited road use, but a road engine is never used for yard work.

One other thing to consider when buying your first HO train set, especially one of diesel prototype, is the road name. All of your locomotives must be painted for the railroad you are modeling (for instance, Pennsylvania), as must be all cabooses, work cars, passenger cars, etc.

The only different heralds you would ever show on your line would be interchanged freight cars and some through passenger cars operating over your right-of-way by agreement.

On diesels, with their flamboyant color, this requires careful attention. Pick your prototype and stick to it.

Now that all ready-to-run has adopted the NMRRA coupler as "standard" (the NMRRA coupler is not considered a standard by the National Model Railroad Association, and model builders can and do use other types) you no longer have to worry about cars of various manufacturers being interchangeable. This eliminates a big headache.

The debate of metal vs plastic will concern you in the locomotive department though. There are arguments on both sides here that are worthy of consideration. Metal is heavier, easier to paint and most durable. Plastic is easily available and easy to change by filing and sawing. In a showdown, for a locomotive, metal is the preferred material. But if the locomotive you want is available only in plastic this should not deter you from buying it.

After you buy your first train set, what is your next acquisition? At least one pair of switches. You may even prefer purchasing several manually controlled switches and adding remote control later. Look at a few good track layouts to get an idea of what you will want in the way of a yard and sidings. You will also want NMRRA uncoupling ramps to cement onto your track wherever you will want to uncouple locomotive or cars.

When you're ready to add more track, seriously consider curvable track. Not only is it 25% cheaper, but you can bend gentle curves into it which are much to be preferred over the harsh geometry of standard radii. Add a few paper building kits to justify sidings and you have an operating railroad.

Happy railroading to you!