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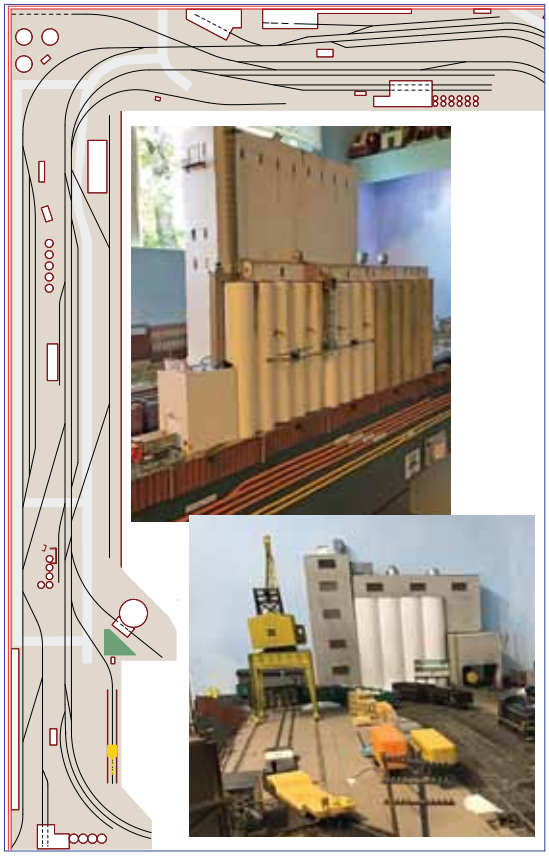
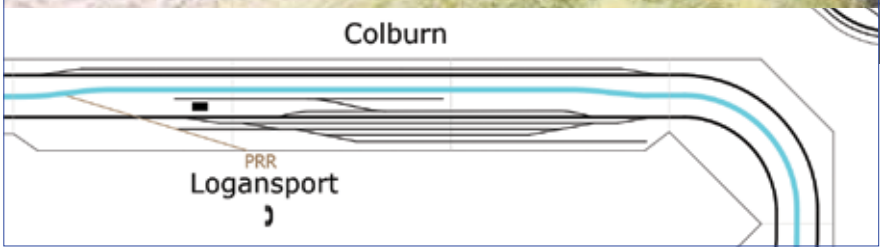
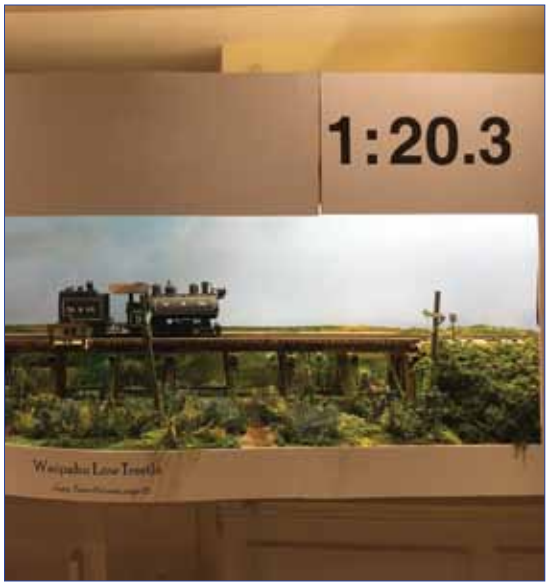
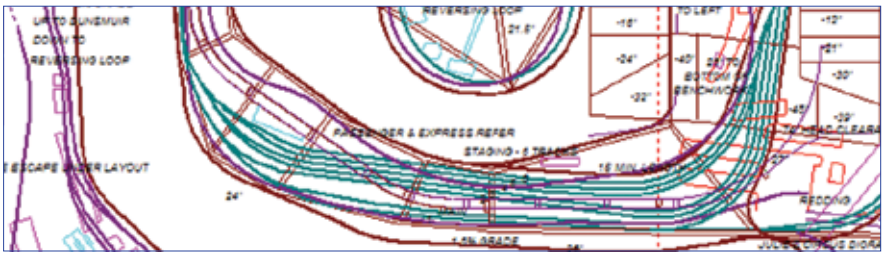
LAYOUT DESIGN JOURNAL 73







Three Railroads on Jones Island
WWWDD: Ops Roadshow
2½" Mountain on a Backdrop?
Mountain Mushroom Redux
LDSIG Board Election



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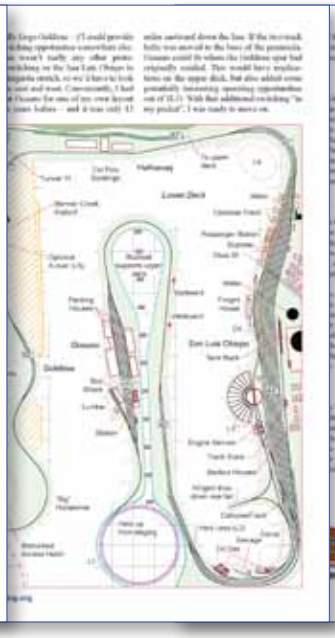

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See Samplers of many back issues at www.ldsig.org/ldj-index

three of these terminals extending into the lake on the prototype, but I only had room for one (see photos page 10). There are five boxcar spots and a tail track for open loads extending to the end of the layout.

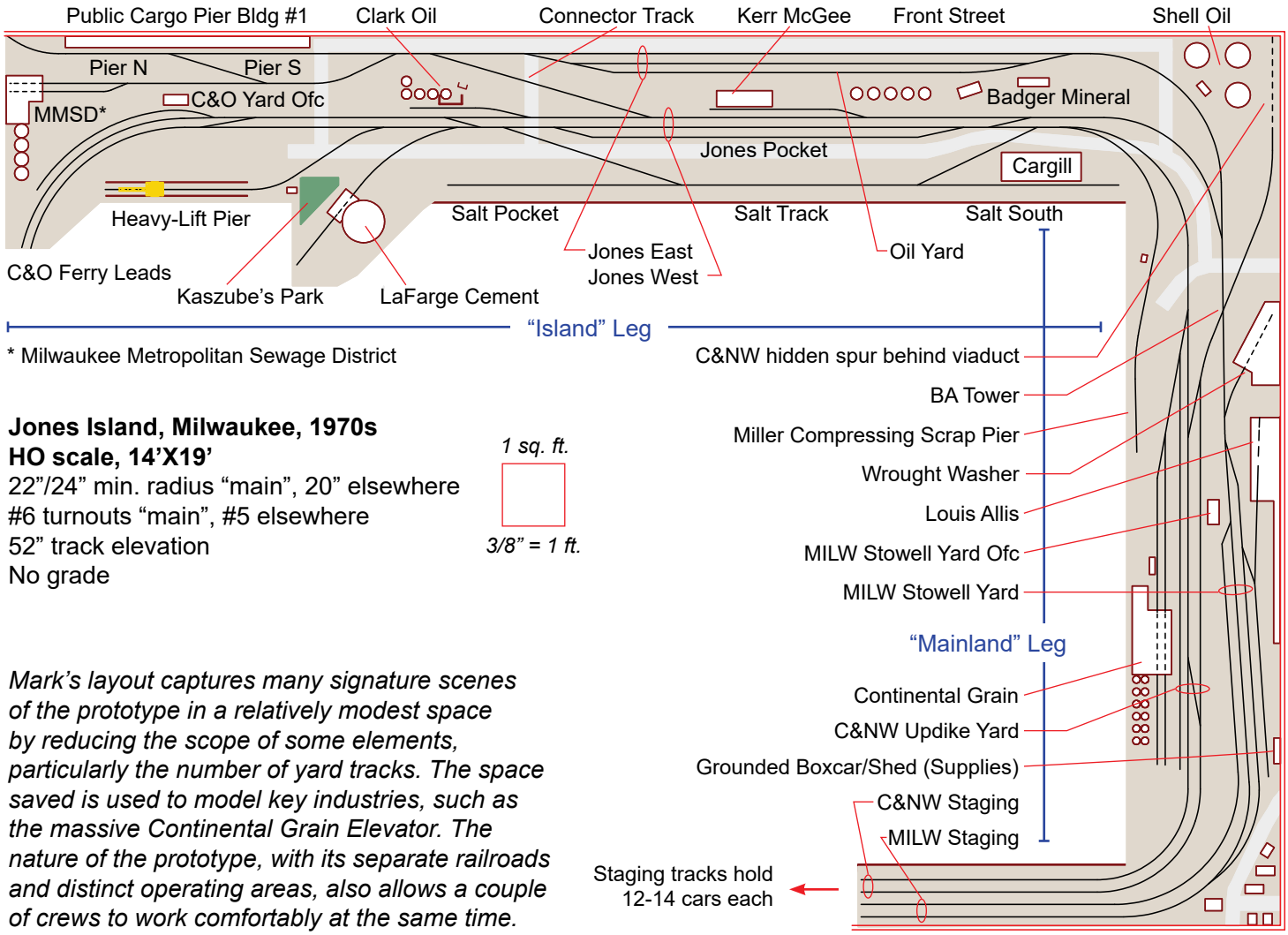
The main track splits into two spurs to serve the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District, located on the north end of the island for over 100 years now. Loads in are usually tanked chemicals, with Milorganite* (Milwaukee's "finest" turned into fertilizer) shipped out by boxcar or covered hopper. At times MMSD has had its own switcher, but today is served by a Trackmobile.

Keeping it down the center

On the other leg, trackage down the center of the island serves (or has served) several smaller industries, mainly chemical or petro-

This view, taken from Continental Grain, looks over the C&NW tracks and shows the east end of Stowell Yard, the yard office, Louis Allis, and Wrought Washer. – MN
The green light in the upper-left distance is the MILW dwarf signal protecting the BA Tower crossing with the C&NW. – BH

** Milorganite is a brand of fertilizer produced from treated sewage sludge by the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District: a portmanteau of "Milwaukee Organic Nitrogen." – BH*



Jones Island, Milwaukee, 1970s
HO scale, 14'X19'
22"/24" min. radius "main", 20" elsewhere
#6 turnouts "main", #5 elsewhere
52" track elevation
No grade

1 sq. ft.
3/8" = 1 ft.

Mark's layout captures many signature scenes of the prototype in a relatively modest space by reducing the scope of some elements, particularly the number of yard tracks. The space saved is used to model key industries, such as the massive Continental Grain Elevator. The nature of the prototype, with its separate railroads and distinct operating areas, also allows a couple of crews to work comfortably at the same time.

2½” Mountain on a Backdrop?

Lessons from museum professionals

by Nicholas Kalis

Over the years I have done a great deal of reading and looking into how model railroad backdrops work. My introduction into backdrops was at a tender age as my father took us to the American Museum of Natural History to see their 1:1 scale animal habitat dioramas. Later I was entranced by similar dioramas that were at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC – wildlife dioramas that are all gone as a result of a renovation fueled by a multi-million donation.

Backdrops and wings

What struck me about the former on Central Park West, besides the animals and flora in natural settings, were how those backdrops worked. At the time I did not know what they were called—Iain Rice used the term “wings”—but these dioramas employed a technique whereby the viewer could not see where the backdrops ended at either end (left or right). Where they ended above the viewer was also concealed.

We see this technique employed artfully at exhibition layouts at shows on both the European Continent and the British Isles (sometimes referred to as “shadow box” effects – *BH*). These diorama designers understood that seeing where the diorama ends (at the edge of the backdrops) spoils the illusion they seek.

Horizon and perspective

A second technique used in these natural history museums was and still is the artful placement of the horizon. Finally, perspective is employed to clinch the deal, so to speak. So, what is the clinching of the deal? It is making the audience feel a part of the scene. Perhaps another effort is to use perspective in the painting of the diorama. While the actual rear wall of the diorama may only be say eight feet away—for example—perspective fools the eye into thinking the scene goes on almost forever.

For a layout, though?

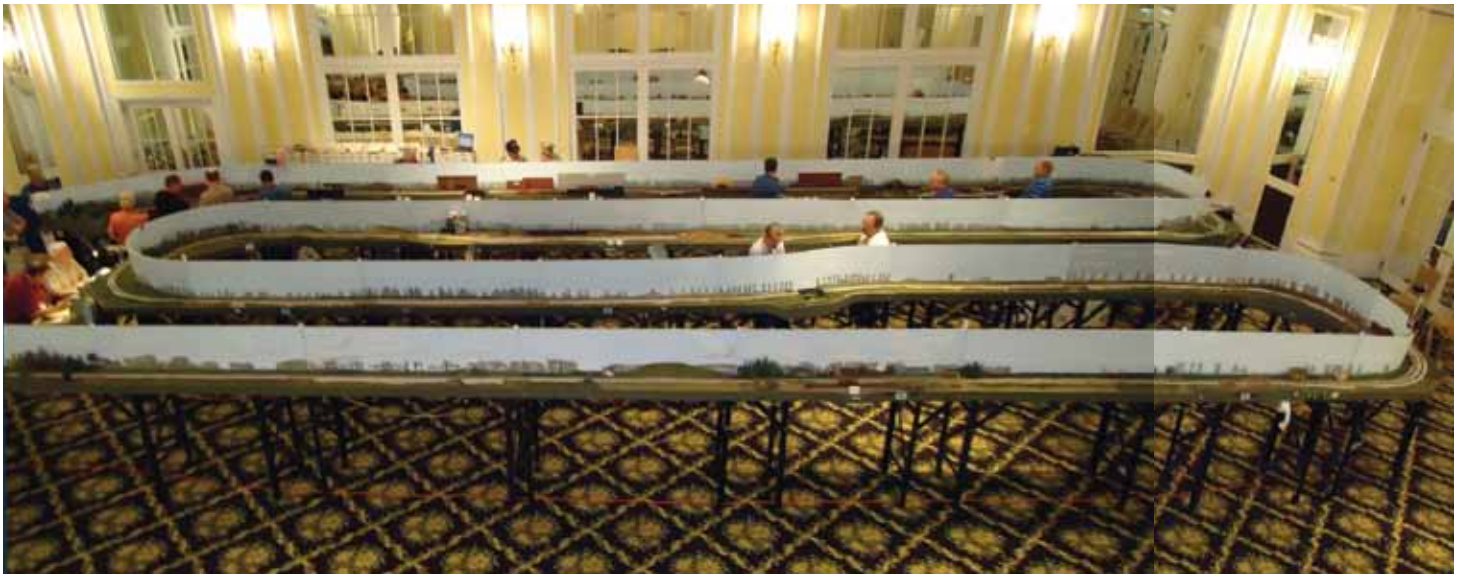
So why bother? Well, model railroads and the scenery in them serve as a form of escapism. We escape the world we are in with its bill collectors, screaming newspaper headlines, etc. and enter another world.

But there is something else at play – somewhat related to escapism but a bit different. That is that before we can let ourselves go and perhaps escape, we must suspend disbelief.

“... we must suspend disbelief. “

With dramas of all sorts—plays, television, and movies (for a few of us perhaps even radio drama)—the writer, director, and producer aim to have their audience suspend disbelief. It is only natural that one disbelieves what one is seeing on a stage. We know it is not reality. But we have gone out for the evening to enjoy ourselves. We cannot have that enjoyment without suspending disbelief. I believe that a

Even in 1:20.3/Fn3 a relatively shallow scene works well thanks to a number of tips from museum diorama designers. The author used a low horizon line and concealed the edges of the backdrop on all sides. His layout consists of a number of scenes that are widely separated in real life, but each is viewed individually as separate vignettes. (*Large scale proportioned correctly for 3’ gauge prototypes)*



The Operations Road Show layout is fifty-three-feet long by twenty-four-feet wide. Double-sided modules are separated with a backdrop down the middle. The narrowest aisle on the layout is 42 inches. Some are as wide as 60 inches. This photo was taken in the Pantlin Ballroom at the 2012 Grand Rapids NMRA National Convention. This may be the nicest room we have ever had in which to conduct our clinics, and the most difficult to access by far. Every rack of modules was carried up two sets of steps, eight steps high. (We were all much younger then.)

sions on the safety of your train movements. Prohibiting views across the room to get unprototypical information is important to the spirit of TT&TO. Thus, the view-blocking backdrops on this modular railroad. 5) Lastly, the layout needed to be portable for transport to NMRA national conventions where we wanted to teach the concepts of TT&TO.

More desired features

Those were the core "Givens" for this railroad. From these absolutes, a few more features were desirable: 1) A main line length length in excess of 240 feet. 2) Communication devices – telephones and train order signals. 3) A freight forwarding system. 4) Written documentation appropriate for this kind of train movement management in the form of a timetable and printed train order and clearance forms. All these rolled together get us close to our desired goal for our railroad.

Search for a prototype

What is missing – how about a prototype railroad to model? None of our builder crew modeled the same prototype. The idea of negotiating between only semi-aligned men to design a freelance railroad was beyond what we felt we could do.

Even though we had experience operating on two of the best examples of freelance railroads in the Midwest—the Atlantic Great Eastern and the Maumee—the skills and knowledge to do that same type of prototype re-creation was years in our future.

A Goldilocks problem

Our choice then was to model from a prototype. None of our favorite prototypes offered an example of a single-track mainline operation with a traffic density that would entertain an eight-man crew for a 3-hour ops session *and* used TT&TO operating rules. If we found the traffic density we wanted, the mainline was either double-tracked or CTC-controlled or both.

That drove us to go shopping for a prototype to model. We wanted to stay with a Midwest type of railroad: The flat-land railroading that interacts with many other railroads and serves the types of Midwest industries we were familiar with. Great mountains or deep river valleys were not part of our vision, nor were huge single-industry installations.

"That drove us to go shopping for a prototype to model."

What we needed was a segment of flat-land, single-track mainline that operated under archaic traffic management rules that handled far too much traffic. We found it in Indiana where the Wabash double-track mainline between Detroit and St. Louis, necks down to a single-track mainline for 100 miles from Peru, Ind. to Tilton, Ill.

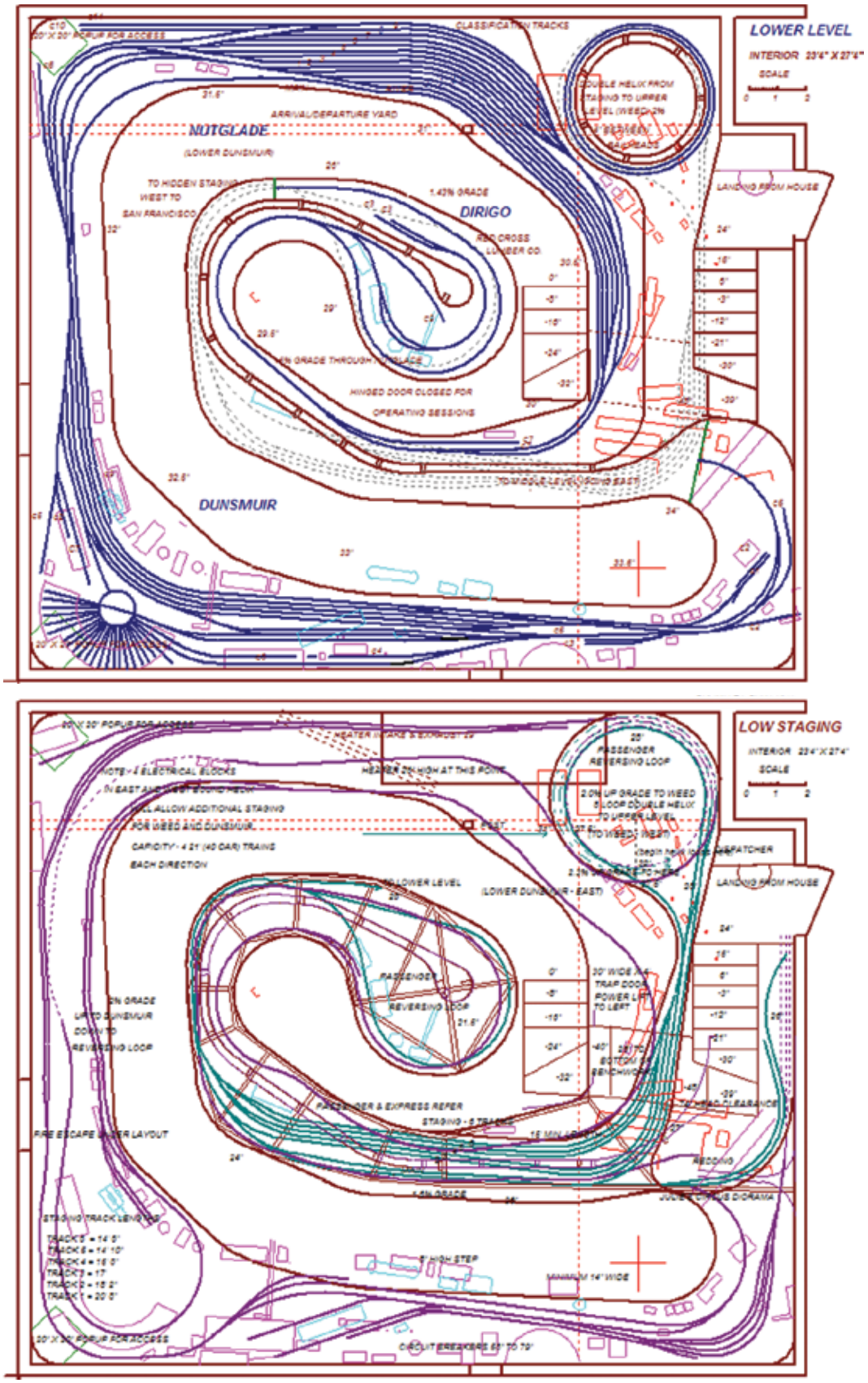
Garage SP Shasta Div. 1926 (from LDJ-72)

by Gary Ray

Gary described this prototype-based HO design in LDJ-72, Third Qtr., 2024. See the rest of the layout on page 39.

Dunsmuir has been a popular modeling subject. See the late Otis McGee's John Armstrong-designed layout in Model Railroader *April, 2005 and Byron Henderson's design in* Model Railroad Planning *2018.*

But neither of those published plans fully incorporates the unique nature of the Dunsmuir area: There were actually two yards; one after the other, since there was not enough room to expand the original yard in the narrow canyon. Gary's design does include the lower Nutglade Yard on the lower visible deck.



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☐ Yes ☐ No Special interest or skill: _____

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Do you model a specific prototype? ☐ Yes ☐ No Prototype(s) modeled: _____

What specific areas or locale of railroading do you model (location) ? _____

Era modeled: _____ Scale(s): _____

Other interests (Main line, branch, yards, division, multi-scales, etc.) _____

Status of layout: _____

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