

The Wig-Wag

Eastern Iowa Division

Mid - Continent Region / NMRA

April 2007



Rooftop Billboard Signs

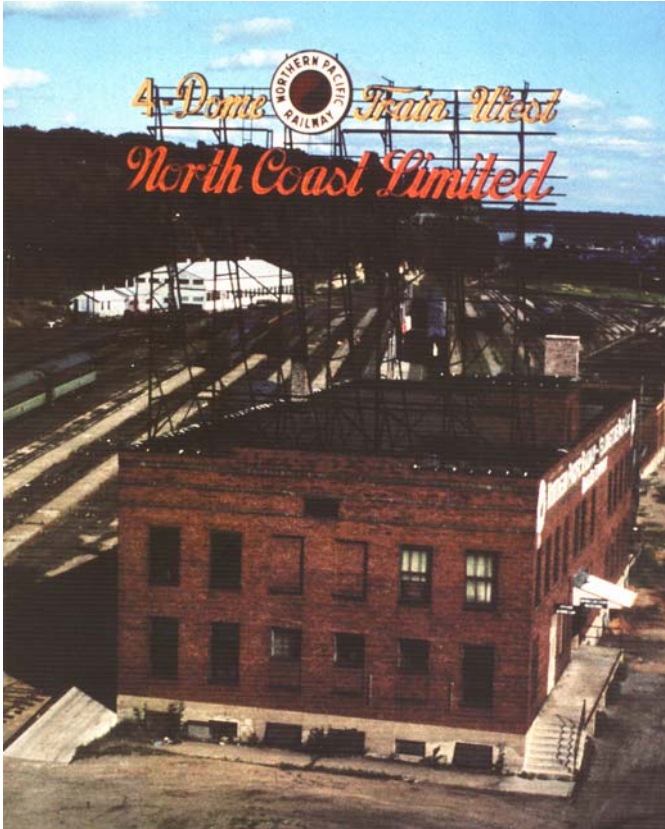
By Allen Merta, Eastern Iowa Division



Back in the 1960s or early 1970s, some rock group did a song – Signs, Signs, Everywhere are Signs. It was one of those rebellious signs of the times that most of us of that generation subscribed to. Signs are all over. Depending upon the location and the use of signs, some people consider signs visual pollution. On the other hand, signs mark our progress through time as rings in a tree.

Railroads had signs, too. In fact, the Northern Pacific Railway used signs to advertise its name train – the North Coast Limited.

The Northern Pacific Railway Historical Association developed a series of exclusive structure kits that are not available elsewhere. One of these kits is a laser-cut rooftop billboard sign that adorned the top of NP's commissary building in St. Paul, MN. The prototype sign was originally a neon sign and stood much taller than the NPRHA kit.



This is the prototype neon sign on top of NP's commissary building in St. Paul, MN. This photo comes from the book **The Vista-Dome North Coast Limited** by William R. Kuebler, Jr. The book is published by Oso Publishing Co.

The NPRHA kit is made by Blair Line and is very similar to its other kits. Although this kit is exclusive to the NPRHA, Blair Line makes laser-cut rooftop signs for the Santa Fe, Texas & Pacific, MoPac, and UP. Blair Line also makes a laser-cut rooftop billboard type sign labeled "Freight Station." It comes with heralds for 30 different railroads.

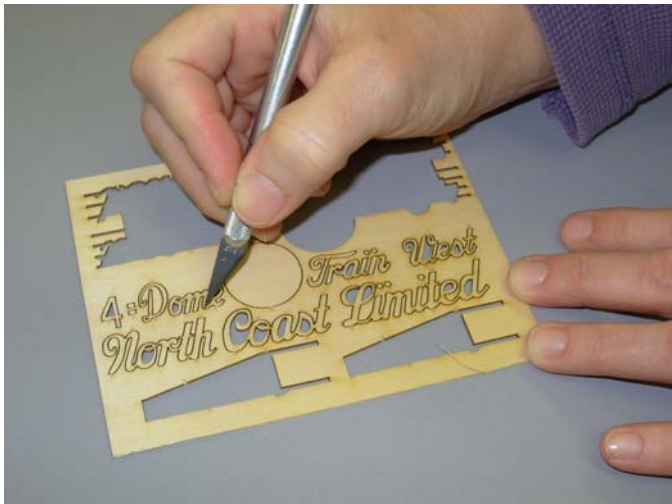


This is the Blair Line laser-cut rooftop billboard sign as it comes in the package.

The assembly instructions that come with the kit contain an excellent exploded view of the sign. The written instructions leave a little to be desired. But I forged forward never having assembled a kit like this before. I did make mistakes.



Here are the tools that I used – Titebond III wood glue, toothpicks, an Exacto knife, sharp pointed tweezers, a #2 brush, and a disposable lid for the glue. Not shown is a sharp, single edge razor blade. (Photo lower right corner, page 2.)



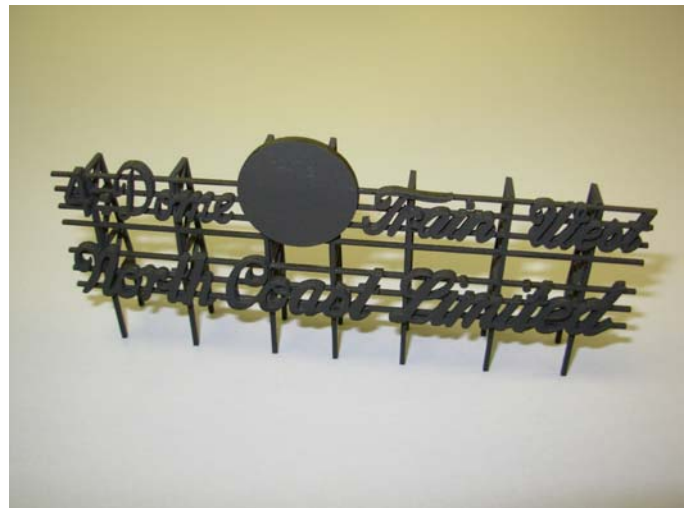
Trimming parts must be done very carefully and with very sharp blades. The carrier sheets are marked with small “v” tick marks indicating where the connections are. Plastic parts on sprues are obvious in comparison.



This is the back of the sign structure assembly with the legs attached. There are notches along the bottom on the lettering structure that the legs push into. This provides the proper spacing for the legs. I spread glue using a toothpick on the face of the legs that contact the vertical ribs of the lettering structure. This provides a strong bond between these fragile parts, increasing their collective strength.



This is a front view of the sign after the raised lettering has been added. The large circle for the railroad herald warped initially, but flattened out as the glue dried. I later added glue to upper half of the circle with a small spring clamp to hold it together. The result is a rock solid joint.



The kit instructions suggested painting the frame work or support structure gray or silver. I chose to paint the structure flat black so that when the raised lettering is painted red and yellow, it pops out brightly and the structure fades into the background. We'll see what it looks like when it's finished.



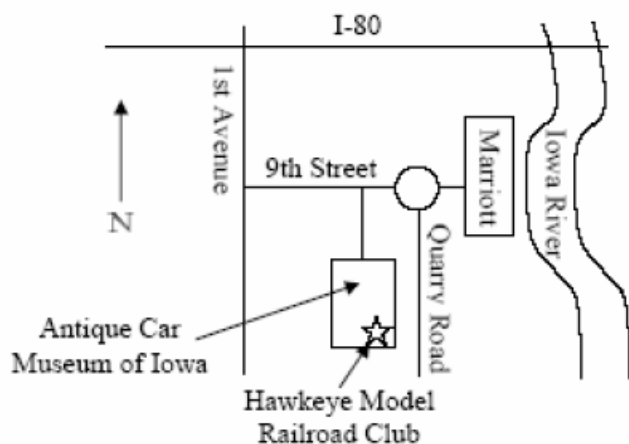
This is the finished laser-cut rooftop billboard sign. I painted the raised letters using Testors paint markers. The herald is “peel & stick” and supplied with the kit

Division Meeting May 5

The Eastern Iowa Division will meet Saturday, May 5, in Coralville. The meeting will be hosted by the Hawkeye Model Railroad Club. The meeting will begin at 9:00 AM. That is earlier than in the past.

The agenda could be one of the best ever. It includes a brief business meeting; then the fun stuff begins. The Hawkeye Model Railroad Club will present its open house/layout tour. Relatively new member Rich Mahaney will present a clinic on tank cars. Ted and Penny Smith will have their layout open for tours as will Jack Ruth. It proves to be an exciting and fun filled day!

The February issue of The Wig – Wag had an article on the Hawkeye Model Railroad Club. A map appears below. The exit off I-80 is #242.



AP - Scenery

By Marty Vaughn MMR

I like building scenery! In fact it is one reason I switched to N scale, I can get more structures and scenery in the same amount of space. But this is the second scariest AP category for most members. This is the only AP certificate where size does matter! You have to build a finished scenery section of sixty square feet in O scale, or forty-five square feet in S scale, or thirty-two square feet in HO scale, or eighteen square feet in N scale or other scales in proportional relationship to HO scale. And yes, if you are an outdoor model railroader you can get the certificate for a scened outdoor railroad too.

One important thing to remember here is that the area you scenic doesn't have to be continuous square feet and it doesn't even have to be on the same layout and it doesn't even have to be on YOUR layout and it doesn't even all have to be built in the same scale. For example, if you are modeling in HO or N in your basement or garage and also in one of the On30 modular groups springing up, any scenery done in your basement can be combined with the scenery on your module. If you are working in different scales, all area is converted to HO. Dividing 32 HO square feet by the 60 O scale square feet gives you a percentage of 53%. So for calculating O square for this you would multiply the O square feet by .53. It sounds harder to calculate than it really is to do!

One other thing to remember is that we are measuring linear square feet. If you build a canyon in a 6'x4' area and it is 3' deep, it only counts as 24 square feet; you can't count the sides of the canyon separately!

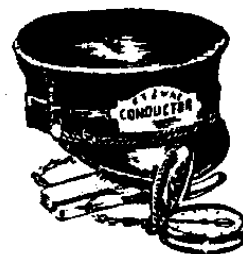
Even using commercial ground foam products, creating scenery is pretty cheap. You can incorporate a lot of natural products, dirt, sand, twigs, etc., that are probably found in your back yard. If you don't like what you've done, it is easy to tear it out and start over. While scenery does have some standards it is a lot more free form than most of your modeling, so loosen up and give it a shot.

You do have to have your final scenery judged and your local AP chairman can set that up for you. The judging standard looks at different criteria than the other model judging, but it is still to a standard of 125 points and you need 87.5 points for the merit award to qualify for the certificate.

You can find the specifics and the form at the NMRA web site:

<http://www.nmra.org/achievement/apc4.html> But don't read more into it than it says!

If you have any questions, my address is on the MCoR website and I will happy to try and answer your questions.



AP - Structures

By Marty Vaughn MMR

I like building structures! I have learned more about dating the age of buildings and architectural features than I ever thought I would know or care about, but I find it interesting.

You have to build 12 structures for this certificate of 6 different types on one has to be a bridge. If you have 6 super detailed and or kit bashed structures you probably have half of what you need. Yes, you do have to have 6 scratch built structures and 6 merit award structures (that's the 87.5 points out of 125 requirement), but they can be the same 6 structures.

I'm not trying to sell you the Brooklyn Bridge here and you don't have to build it either. A foot bridge is still a bridge if you are bridge challenged. An outhouse is still a structure and can count toward the requirement. While earning a merit award with an outhouse is difficult because they are usually such simple structures, I have seen an outhouses earn merit awards.

As with any of the AP modeling categories, for scratch build purposes you can use wood or styrene structural shapes like Evergreen or Mt. Alberts without losing scratch built points. Don't read into the requirements more than what it really says.

You can find the specifics and the form at the NMRA web site:

<http://www.nmra.org/achievement/apc3.html> But don't read more into it than it says!

If you have any questions, my address is on the MCoR website and I will happy to try and answer your questions.



My Last Issue; My Final Days

By Allen Merta, Eastern Iowa Division

The April 2007 issue of *The Wig – Wag* is my last issue as the editor. April marks 23 issues of writing, editing, printing, folding, stuffing, mailing, and emailing *The Wig – Wag* to you. When we experienced some computer problems, my son Ben, who is now an EID member, took over for that one issue.

Before you go drafting him as the next editor, I will tell you that he has his hands full. He is a civil and construction engineer coming into construction season with at least two major projects he is responsible for. He and his wife are expecting their second child at the end of May. And Rita and I can tell you first hand that it takes every bit of our energy to keep up with our granddaughter. I can only imagine how tired he must be!

Like Ben, several people contributed articles – Tony Bowen, Peter Jaynes, Marty Vaughn, Tom Persoon, Ted Smith, Patrick Lana, Allen Keller, and Gary Zillyette. Thank you to you all.

April 1st also marks the end of my tenure as your Superintendent. Nominations will be requested followed by a special election to fill my remaining term, which expires December 31, 2008.

I plan to continue my membership and participating in EID activities. In fact, the officers will distribute an annual report that I prepared summarizing our first year as a chartered division of MCoR and NMRA. The annual report also describes activities that I envisioned for the Division. It is a laundry list, because I'm sure that not all of them are necessarily desirable or feasible. I hope that many of them become "staple activities," marking the Eastern Iowa Division as one of the best and most active divisions around.

There are several people that I must thank, but this is not intended to be an Academy Awards acceptance speech. I will simply say "thank you" to everyone who provided advice, support, constructive criticism, and the Post-It Note on my back that read "Otto." I smile broadly when Peter Jaynes refers to my beloved Northern Pacific Railway as the "Nothing Specific."

You are in good hands with Peter Jaynes and Tony Bowen, your Paymaster and Clerk, respectively.

Finally, I've been waiting all week to say this: Tony, get back to work! Spring break is over!

