

Progress on the Barre, Chelsea, and Corinth – July 2020

Another day of breaking rock at Miller's Quarry has ended and the crew is headed home. Snow is already coating the Heights from an early storm, and soon the quarry will shut down for the winter, but the maintenance crew will be spending a good part of the cold months in the shop repairing equipment using the parts and supplies in the CP boxcar being delivered by CV 4927.



Next projects in this area are building the quarry office, repair shop, and crossing shanty (there's a crossing just out of the picture at bottom) and to finish the scenery at lower right. The upper track is actually non-operational "scenery" as the track goes over the world-famous Williamstown Gulf Invisible Bridge, not seen below, and then "off the edge of the world" to the right.



I'm still going back and forth on whether to build a ballasted deck girder bridge or the Campbell curved trestle that I dug out of the "really old kits I have still have kicking around" box after reading Tim's Quincy Station and Cordage Works clinics. The trestle would need all of the posts that come with the kit replaced with longer pieces – and a lot of additional crossbraces - which argues for just scratchbuilding the thing. Given the amount of (fun!) work that would be and the fact that the bridge isn't all that visible without sticking your head right where the camera is, I'm pretty sure I'll go with the deck bridge and save the trestle project for a more prominent spot.

The section from the bridge to the far backdrop, where the red building is, has had me stumped for a while but I've finally decided to put in a granite quarry because, well, this *is* the Barre, Chelsea & Corinth Railroad and so it has to

have a granite quarry. I have Bill Gove's excellent book "Sky Route to the Quarries" for source material. The quarry will, of course, mine the famous Barre Gray granite, not the Texas Pink granite visible at the rear of the photo.

Sidenote: A bit after this photo was taken the nice, expensive Micro-Trains CP boxcar literally went over the edge and lost a chunk of one of its ends, so now I have the first "project car" needed for creating a work train, although the work train will not be nearly as complex as Lou's. I'll just cut off half the body, build a new end with a door and window, weather the heck out of it, pile a bunch of materials and tools on the open deck, and voila - supply car. Project # 769 on the List. I think I'm on project #17 now...

While I dithered about the new granite quarry area, I decided to literally move past it and around the corner to experiment with a late winter sugaring scene. The other name for the BC&C is the XperimeNtal Railroad, after all. I could have planned out the scenery, perhaps with a drawing, or maybe a clay model of the model railroad to better visualize what it would look like. I even have Tony Koester's book on planning scenery which has a lot of great ideas, and actually do plan to (mostly) pre-plan the scenery on the Air Line. In the end, though, I went with the tried and true "keep trying things until you just say 'it's good enough, I can always change it later'" method.

The process, if that's what it can be called, is described below. What method(s) do you use for scenery planning?

1. Place the sugarhouse down by the tracks and try a "near view" backdrop. I take a lot of photos at different times of year while I'm driving places in order to gather background scenes. Still trying to decide between photo backdrops and painted backdrops but leaning toward the photos these days. If you look closely at the backdrop in the first photo above you'll see a couple of photos worked into the center of it, although they've been "enhanced" with washes of paint to blend in better.



2. How about putting the sugarhouse up on a hill? This is Vermont, after all. There is no shortage of hills. Change the backdrop photo to one with a weathered old farm in it. A bridge might be nice, and I painted that silver Kato bridge a while back so it's ready to be put to use, but how to hide where the bridge dead ends into the backdrop?



3. Forget the bridge. Change out the foreground photo and add a photo of Mt. Moosilauke, one of the 4,000-footers in New Hampshire visible from east-Central Vermont, behind it. Technically, it's misplaced and should be farther 'south' and 'east' on the layout but, hey, it's my railroad and I like it here.



4. The sugarhouse is too close to the edge of the world (out of photo at left) so it needs to be moved closer to the track. However, the woodshed hanging out in space doesn't really work, either, though, so something will need to be done about that. What about adding a building flat to the scene? If the red building looks familiar, it's because it's the same red building from a few photos above, just, umm, deconstructed.



5. I liked the color 'pop' the building flat brought to the scene, but it looks too close to the track and a bit odd. What if the hill and sugarhouse was on the other side of the tracks, on a cliff? Forget the building flat, add the bridge, and go for the wide snow-covered field look behind it. Note: what's with the backdrop paint? Need to repaint it.



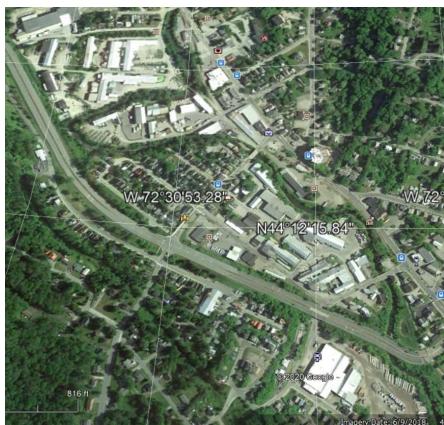
8. Just don't like the bridge there. Or the sugarhouse on the very vertical cliff. So, widen the hill on the other side of the tracks and put the sugarhouse back. Alternatively, I could have built a stone or concrete foundation under the woodshed, but decided thrifty Vermonters would not go to all that work and expense for a woodshed.



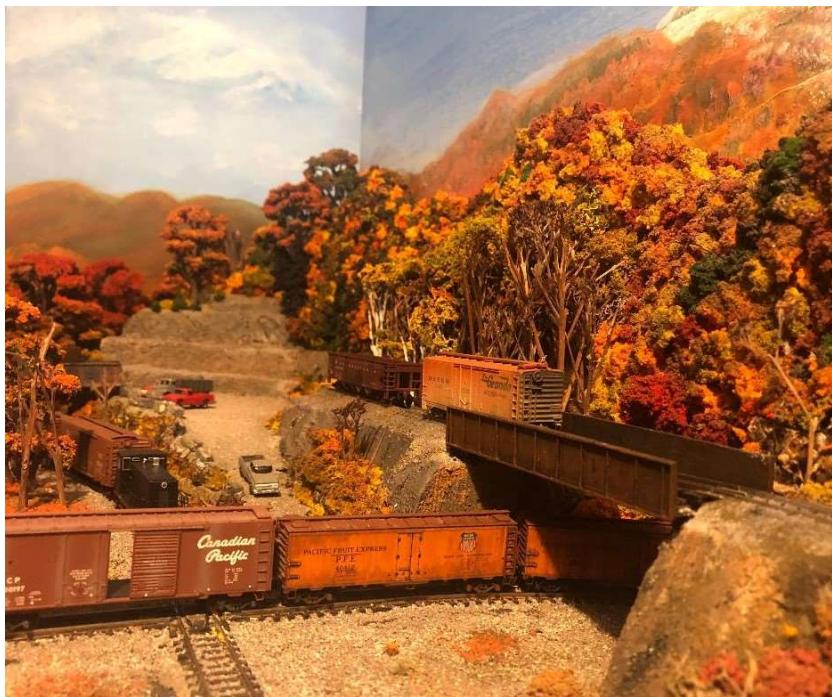
9. Get out the Sculptamold and then add some trees. OK, I like that.



10. Almost done with the sugaring scene. Next steps are to add some color to the rocks in the cut, "plant" the sugarhouse in the snow, add ice in the drainage ditches between and alongside the tracks, add a fiber optic interior light using a Dwarvin Lamplighter, and place a few figures, sap buckets, and other details to finish it up. Then it will be back to wrap up Miller's Quarry and the Barre Granite Quarry. Then, the next big project is the Barre granite district. With all the granite sheds in that area, part of which is shown in the Google Earth photo below, it could keep me busy building structures for a long time.



However, I still need to build a visible staging yard and the Corinth Copper Company complex for the BC&C and do want to start building the New Haven Air Line portion of the layout sometime within the decade. Luckily, the available space for Barre is pretty small (1' x 4') and there's quite a bit of real estate already taken up by track, so many of the structures will be building flats or partial buildings along the backdrop and the fascia (another future experiment).



Final shot is of Miller's Quarry again, with Three Bridges Crossing in the foreground. That 44-tonner is fresh out of the shop and pressed back into service before lettering and safety stripes were added! Where the backdrops meet would be coved except that there's actually a 12" gap between the two pieces. There is only a 4' partial backdrop splitting the 6' long layout in two lengthwise, then backdrops on the ends. That was an experiment that didn't work out quite the way I wanted it to, so I'll be going with full length backdrops and coved corners as much as possible in the future.

Thanks for reading through all this. Hope to get back to the club and see you all sometime in the near future. In the meantime - Happy Modeling!