N-Circle Railroad Update – September 5, 2022

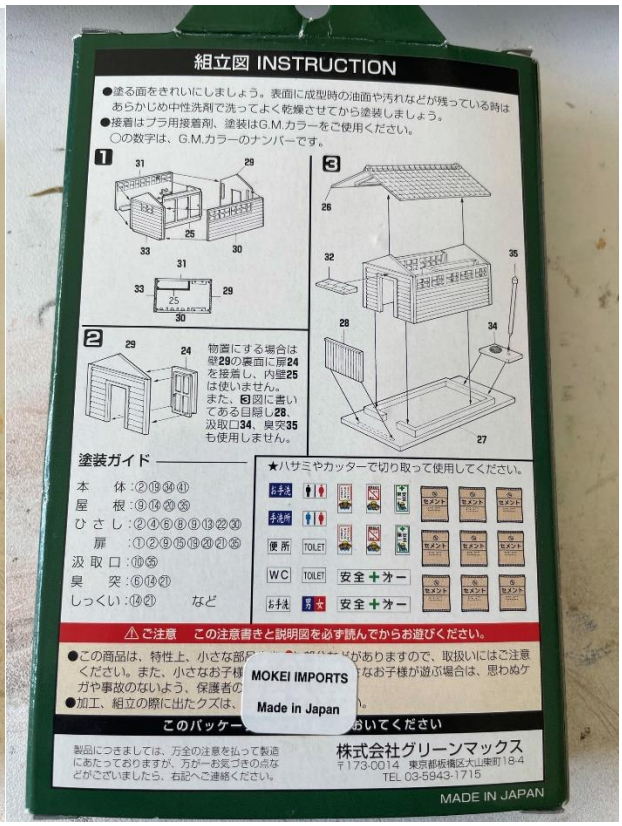
It has been a while since our last N-Circle Railroad update, but with many interfering commitments to other projects behind us, we can finally return to modelling! This update will discuss a recent styrene structure kit build, and multiple vehicles kit builds and detailing, with tips for stabilizing tiny N-scale pieces while cement sets, and simple masking techniques for spray painting without requiring the use of tediously-applied masking tapes.

Rest Rooms Kit

In N-Circle Update 11 from December 2021, we showed the modifications to a restroom building, but even after lowering the roof, we concluded it was still too large for N-scale, and probably was a TT-scale structure. Therefore, we are starting over to build restrooms for the mini-golf course and eventual larger park scene.

Green Max kit # 26-700 contains two buildings. It is a nice design, generic enough to be used in either a 1950s or 1980s scene.

N-Circle_22-08-10_GreenMax_Restrooms_1 & N-Circle_22-08-10_GreenMax_Restrooms_2

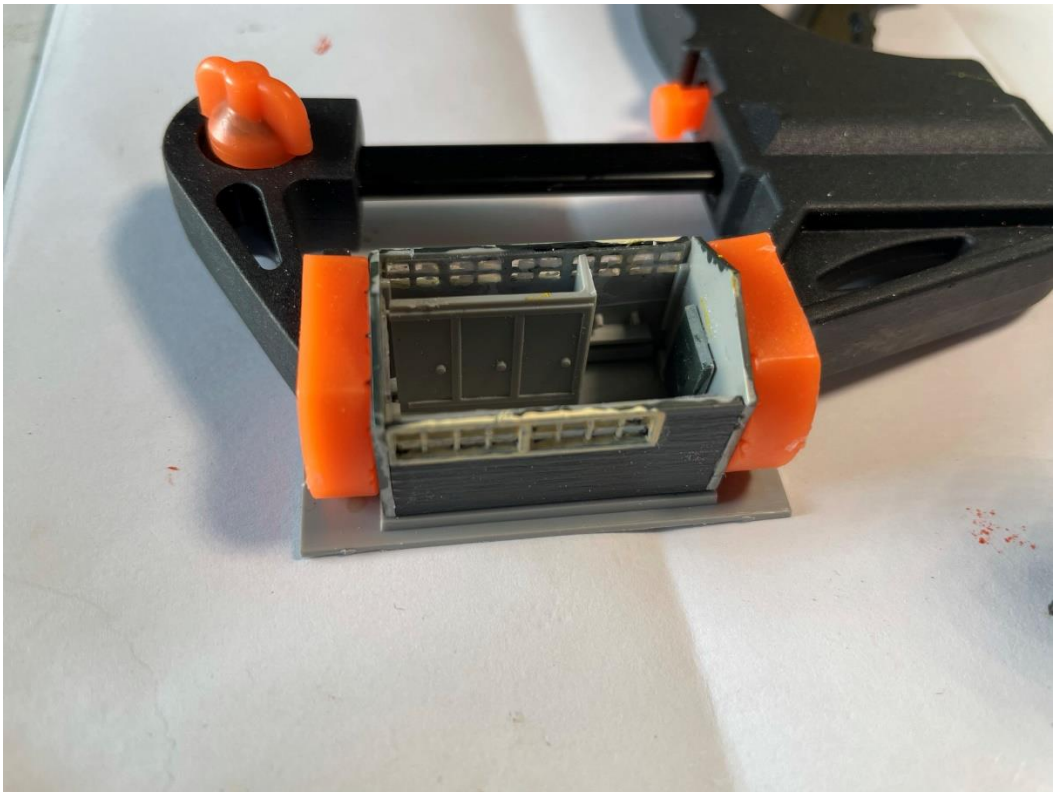


Before beginning assembly, I applied a base coat of Polly Scale PRR Brunswick Green paint on the exterior walls while they were still on the sprues. But it is very dark, almost black, so I used

a slightly lighter Polly Scale Pullman Green for the final coat. Is still very dark, but better for a building in a park. I then used CSX Tan for the door and window trim, to produce a more weathered look than a bright white.

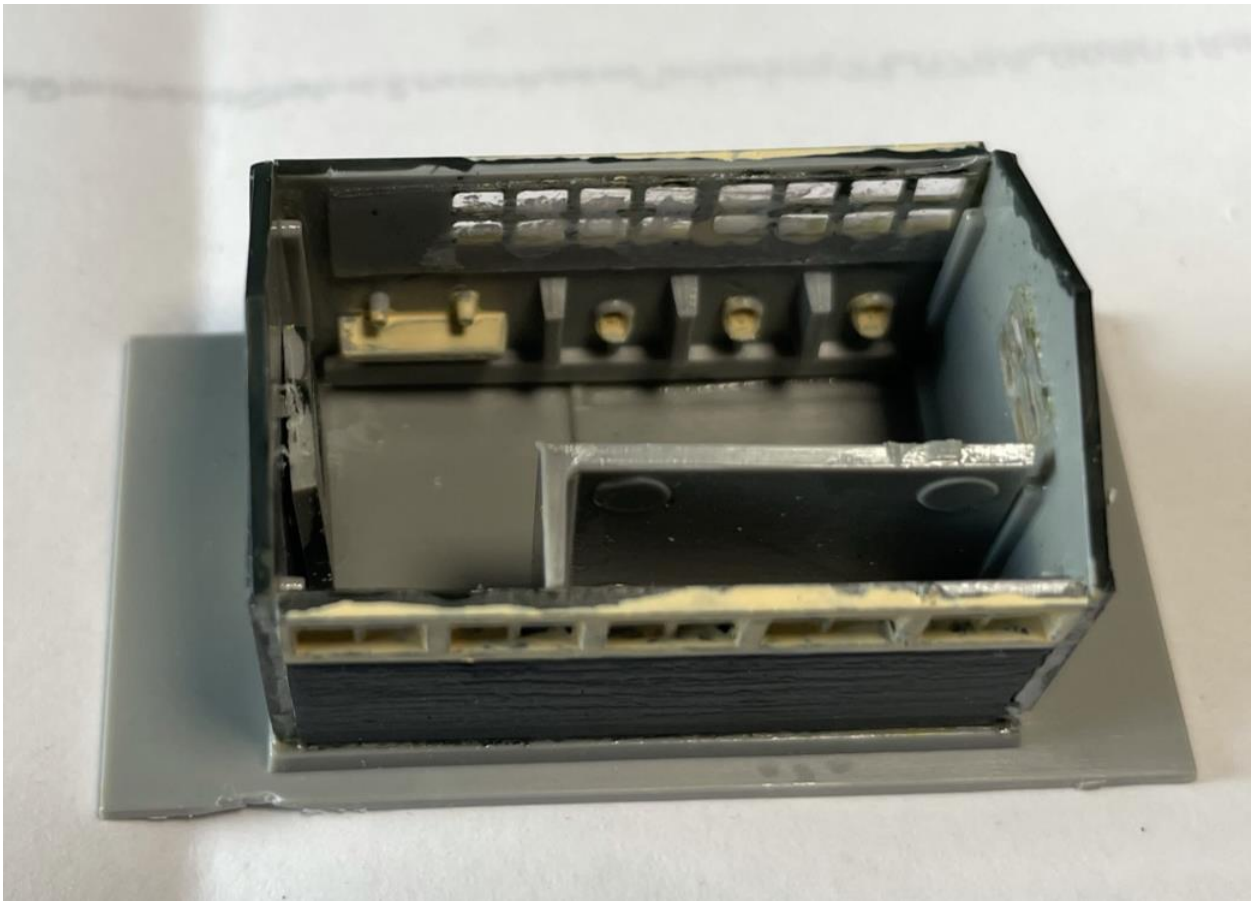
After gluing the four walls, I used the plastic clamp shown in this photo to hold them tightly until the glue set. It is a small, cheap plastic clamp from the cut-out bin at ACE Hardware, but it worked well for this task.

N-Circle_22-08-14_GreenMax_Restrooms_1



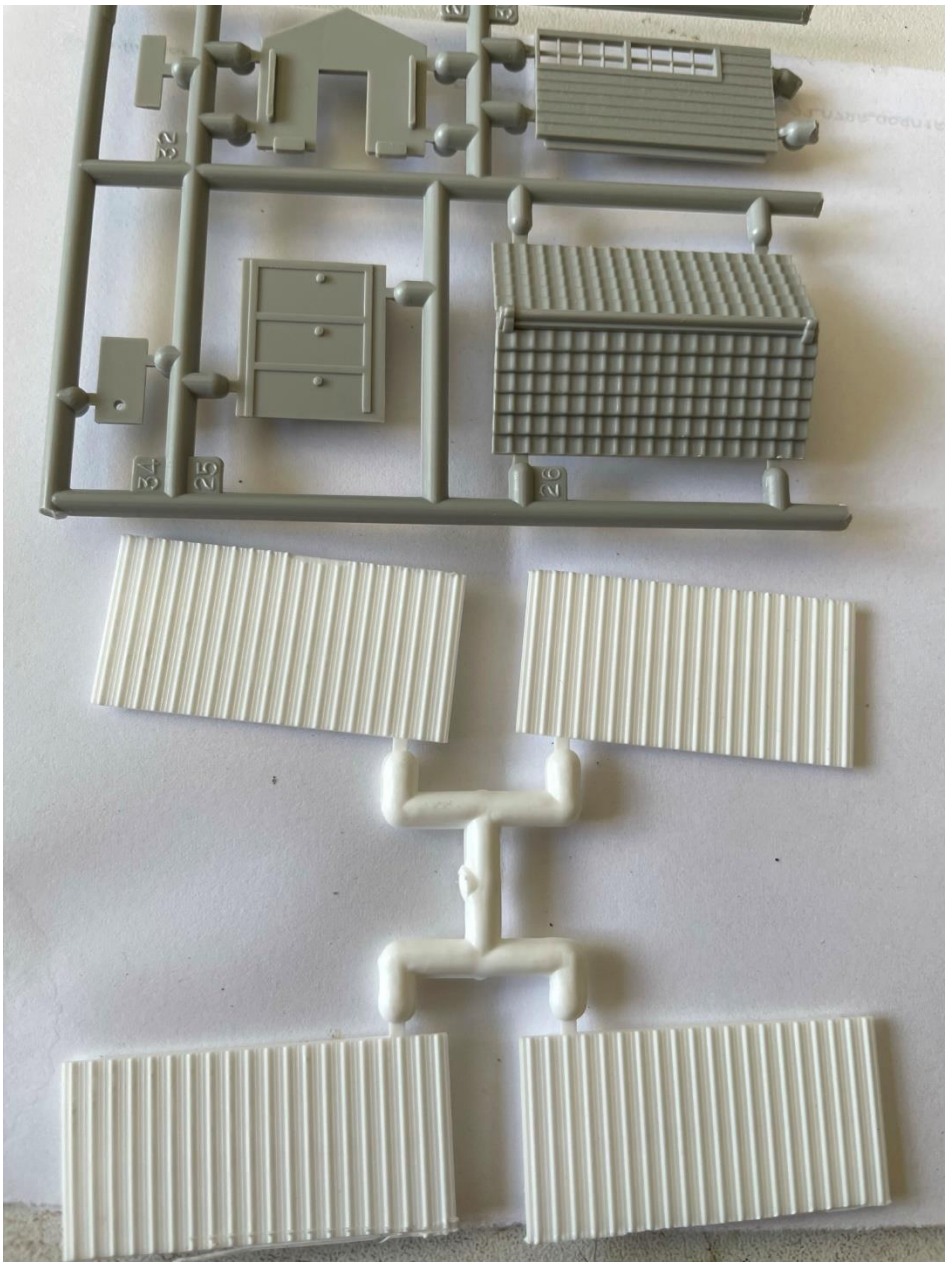
The kit includes details on interior walls for urinals, bathroom stalls, etc., which is all lost effect because there are only small, high windows, as one would expect with a restroom. I considered installing the doors partway open, but with the privacy wall in front of the door, and the need to be at precisely the right angle to see through an N-scale doorway, it didn't seem like it was worth the effort. I painted the urinals and sinks in the light tan used for the trim, as can be seen in this interior photo before attaching the roof.

N-Circle_22-08-14_GreenMax_Restrooms_3



As can be seen in the kit box photo above, the tile roof in the kit reveals its Japanese origin. Therefore, I replaced the roof with steel panels left over from the Pike Stuff kit build from Update 9 from October 2021, to give an American look. The next photo shows the original roofs, and the white steel panels to replace them.

N-Circle_22-08-10_GreenMax_Restrooms_3



I cut the roof panels to size with a fine-tooth saw, then beveled the edges that will meet at the ridge pole. However, I didn't produce perfectly straight edges, so it ended up with gaps at the end, as seen in this photo.

N-Circle_22-08-16_GreenMax_Restrooms_1

Therefore, to hide the gaps and the seam where the two sections come together, I used a section of rain gutter unused from another kit, cut it to length and cemented it over the seam, open side down. To ensure these ridge poles stayed aligned while weighted during drying I placed a small sheet of glass across the two roofs and added weights on top of it. This allowed me to confirm I did not move the pieces while clamping them.

N-Circle_22-08-16_GreenMax_Restrooms_2

There was still some gap at a couple of the ends, which I filled with Elmer's glue before painting, then painted the underside of the eaves with Wood Tan, as they would probably not be painted like the exterior walls on a structure like this.

Cementing the privacy walls to the base to have them square and vertical is a bit tricky. To accomplish this, I cut a thin piece of packing foam to the width between the end of the building and the desired position of the wall, to hold the wall in place while the cement dried.

N-Circle_22-08-20_GreenMax_Restrooms_1

To create a complete scene, I cemented the two buildings to a sheet of thin white styrene, then painted the base similar to the mini-golf course described in N-Circle Update 10 from October 2021, with base layers of browns, followed by a wash of Grass Green. After adding a couple of customers and other details, I sprayed everything with a coat of Testor's Dull Cote.

Here we see the final result up close. As expected, the interior detail is totally lost, never to be seen again through the tiny windows under the eaves, only preserved in the photo in this document!

N-Circle_22-08-28_GreenMax_Restrooms_1

After adding some ground foam shrubbery at the base of the buildings, we finally we see them replacing the 1:120 TT-scale restroom from Update 11 and looking much more to scale with the adjacent mini-golf course!

N-Circle_22-08-30_GreenMax_Restrooms_4

The color mixes are different on the restrooms base than on the mini-golf course, and the golf course was built on thicker foam board, so they do not meld together well now. But it's an incremental improvement over the previous version of the scene, which is the strategy with the development of the N-Circle layout at this point. Eventually these two sub scenes may be used in a different orientation in the park scene to be developed for the east side end cap modules. At that point we will need to add ground foam grass and gravel on the pathways of this restrooms base and the mini-golf course to create a uniform scene, but we will practice and perfect our technique elsewhere before applying them to these sub scenes!

In this later close-up shot, there may be issues, as the septic truck has just pulled up in front… Lady, you may not want to go in there!

N-Circle_22-09-05_GreenMax_Restrooms_2

This restrooms project took about seven hours to complete.

1980s Wayne Feeds Trucks

We need trucks for the 1980s operation of the Wayne Feeds mill described in Update 8 in August 2021. The trucks shown in those photos and the kit-bashed grain truck from Update 12 are good for the 1950s, but would not still be in use in the 1980s

Therefore, I recently purchased three 3-D printed 1973 Dodge feed trucks on eBay from The Railroad Connection. The 3-D printing is pretty rough in this small scale, the following photo gives an idea, but is not sufficient resolution to capture the roughness of all of the surfaces.

N-Circle_22-08-10_3-D_GrainTrucks

Therefore, the first step was to clean up the plastic flashing. I used sprue cutters to trim off major protrusions and threads, then a fine cutting head in a Dremel tool to cut out residual plastic around the wheels, etc. and finally a conical sanding bit to smooth the printing lines on the hood and roof. This is all delicate work, and requires being very gentle on the wheels, as they are only held to the body by a small plastic stub.

Next, I painted the cabs and box sides with International Orange, then later applied a brown watery wash on sides of boxes to give a worn painted wood look. A mix of Signal Red and BAR Gray produced a dark red for the fenders similar to that on the 1950s trucks.

For the cab windows, I painted them with a dark gray, then after that had thoroughly dried, applied a coat of Micro-Scale Kristal Klear over them. When that dries, it creates a nice, clear glass-like coating for the windows. For the headlights, I applied silver paint first, then a dot of Kristal Klear to create a glass lens effect, as seen in the final finished photo.

I added rear view mirrors to the poorly formed mirror supports, rather than just cutting them off. I cut tiny rectangles from the piece of leftover window glaze and super-glued to the supports, then painted the supports and mirrors with silver paint. They look okay, though a bit over-sized and the angle is a bit off.

I used Testor's clear Gloss Cote on the cabs and Dull Cote on the beds. When spraying Gloss Cote on vehicles, I like to mask the wheels and tires, which would not be glossy in real life. For this project, and many future vehicle kits I have yet to build, I made a set of universal spray masks that don't require taping or detailed preparation. I cut short sections from a 3/16-inch diameter wood dowel and glued them to small squares of thin cardboard. The cardboard edge is placed under the wheel, with the end of the dowel aligned to the face of the wheel on all four corners before spraying. I made three pairs where the dowel is on the edge of the cardboard, so they can be spaced closely for dual-axle trucks. They ae shown in use here when spraying the grain trucks, and I will reuse them for future vehicles. A similar technique could be used for HO or larger scale vehicles, using larger diameter dowel sections.

To shield the beds while spraying the cabs and vice-versa, I cut simple shields from copier paper, which wedged behind the back of the cab to stay in place while spraying., as shown in this picture with the wheel masks.

N-Circle_22-08-21_3-D_GrainTrucks_1

In the end, these trucks are okay for the “look good from ten feet” rule, but I would not recommend 3-D printed models for producing high-quality close-up finished vehicles. The 3-D printing leaves ridges on everything, which are very difficult to smooth out without damaging the model, even when using a Dremel tool.

N-Circle_22-08-22_3-D_GrainTrucks-4

I will need to get more Wayne Feeds decals like those used on the Wiking truck in N-Circle Update 12 to add later to the sides of the boxes.

I also recently purchased two new Atlas Ford LNT 9000 semi-tractors, painted for Schlitz Beer, because the fenders were already a dark red usable for Wayne Feed trucks. For these, I repainted the cabs with the same orange as used on the grain trucks above and added the dark red to the wheels.

To have something for these tractors to pull, I purchased a GHQ Dry Grain Trailer kit on eBay. This is another pewter metal kit, like the wrecker trucks discussed in Update 12. This kit was much easier to build, as it was mostly large pieces (by N-scale standards…) and did not have as many tiny, intricate pieces to attach like the wrecker. Although the end ladders and chute valve handles still presented challenges to align to tiny holes that need to be drilled out with a 0.015” bit. I used a hand-held pin vise, and it wasn’t too bad a task. The ladders are very delicate metal, and a challenge to install without warping them, which I was only partially successful in doing

When I opened the package, I found it contained two right walls and no left wall. Fortunately, there is no significant difference in the exterior of the front versus rear of the walls, and they could fit to the base in either direction. So rather than trying to find a left wall for this kit, I got out the super glue and started assembly. The directions talk about trimming flash and testing alignment before gluing. What they don’t mention is that long pieces of pewter metal like this may not be straight. One needs to lay them on a flat surface, then very gently bend them as

necessary to be straight. It is a bit tricky to get the first two pieces aligned and in place before the glue starts to set – I ended up some gaps around the roof, but they are not too noticeable…?!

I left the body of the trailer in its natural pewter color, and just added yellow details on the end ladders and chute valve handles, then applied a spray coat of Testor's Dull Cote. I will need to add Wayne Feeds decals to the sides of this trailer later also.

The following photos show the finished trailer behind one of the Atlas Ford tractors.

N-Circle_22-08-28_GHQ_DryGrainTrailer_1

N-Circle_22-08-28_GHQ_DryGrainTrailer_3

Note the yellow placard on the bottom front on the right side, bottom rear on the left side – the only discernable indicator that the trailer was built with two right walls…!

The paint I used on the cabs of these 1980s trucks is more orange than the cabs on the Classic Metal Works 1950s Wayne Feeds semi-trucks seen in the background of the restrooms photo above, so I should have mixed a better shade of yellow. But since these 1980s trucks will not be used on the layout at the same time as the 1950s trucks, and I could not find any prototype photos of Wayne Feeds trucks on the internet for anyone to compare them to, we will write it off to “artistic license”!

1980s Conrail Trailers

While working on semi-trucks, I pulled out a Wheel Works kit purchased back in 1988 containing a pair of Conrail 40’ van semi-trailers. This was a fairly simple kit, with a styrene body and undercarriage parts and metal wheels. However, attaching the wheel supports and parking stand to the underframe requires cementing thin pieces perpendicular to the body, with no horizontal support. The metal wheels are super-glued to the ends of metal axles. I should have enlarged to holes in the wheels so the axles went fully into the holes - they do not as-delivered. Therefore, the resultant final model is very fragile, and will probably not stand up to handling in TOFC service, but the trailers should be okay in a static yard scene. One of the trailers is shown here.

N-Circle_22-08-28_WheelWorks_ConrailTrailer_1

1950s School Buses

The school buses in the photos from N-Circle Update 12 were made by Tsugawa, and I realized after the photo shoot they are Japanese buses, with the passenger door on the left side – thus in the United States, the kids would be exiting into the middle of the road! To fix this dangerous safety issue for the possible sharp-eyed viewer of the N-Circle, I purchased on eBay three 1940 Ford school bus kits, one produced by Bruce Richardson's Cars and two from Fine N Scale Products, but all three are clearly from the same mold, and were made some years ago.

These are simple kits with minimal mold flashing to clean up, one just has to paint the bodies and glue on the wheels. I used Tamiya flat yellow paint, which is a good, bright yellow for school buses, but does not cover well with a brush, and required three coats.

The windows on these buses are deeply recessed. Therefore, I painted the surfaces of the windows with a dark gray, then after that had thoroughly dried, applied a coat of Micro-Scale Kristal Klear over the openings. When that dries, it creates a nice, clear glass-like coating for the windows, as seen in the following photo. For the headlights, I used the same silver paint followed by a drop of Kristal Klear as for the grain trucks above.

N-Circle_22-08-21_SchoolBuses_2

I didn’t have any school bus decals, maybe a future customization project, but there weren’t any markings on the Japanese buses either.

So here is an updated photo of the school scene from Update 12. These are 1940 buses in a 1950s scene, but money has been tight in the school district, and these old Fords just keep running! But at least now the kids can exit to the sidewalk, and not into the middle of the street.

N-Circle_22-08-26_SchoolBuses_1

These eleven vehicles took about sixteen hours to complete, with a lot of time reduction achieved by using a paint color on multiple vehicles at the same time and applying Clear Cotes on groups together.

The instructions for the Bruce Richardson’s school bus included tips for adding pieces of wire for exhaust pipes. I considered: How many hours am I willing to spend adding tiny exhaust pipes to hundreds of N-scale vehicles? Not this year!