

N-Circle Railroad Update – August 14, 2021

This N-Circle Railroad update will describe “kit-bashing” a couple of old, low-quality plastic kits to create reasonably presentable, distinctive structures.

But first, an update on my modeling environment. We bought a new kitchen table, so I cut the legs down on the old one to replace my old particle board assemble-yourself train room workbench. I kept the tabletop and drawer from this old workbench and built bolt-on end stands to support it for use in the garage.

[TrainRoomWorkBench_21-07-02](#)



GarageWorkBench_21-07-02



Cementing projects can now be done in the garage with the door open in warm weather, eliminating any fumes concerns, and the need to set up the doorway fume fan from my March 2021 update! When cold weather comes and the car needs to go back in the garage, the legs can be removed from the top, and the whole thing can be stored against a wall. I will then need to bring the doorway fume fan back into use!

Anyway, on to the modelling. My first projects were to build the old Life-Like Rapid Recycling Center and Model Power Fire House kits I had bought years ago. They are lower quality kits that I attempted to just sell on eBay this spring. But having not received starting bids sufficient to justify hauling them to the Post Office, I decided to “re-purpose” them for some temporary fill buildings on the layout, as practice before moving on to more significant kit builds.

Wayne Feeds Grain Mill

I re-purposed the Rapid Recycling Center as a Wayne Feeds grain mill, to justify the purchase of a pair of Wayne Feeds grain semi-trucks some years ago. While looking for grain silos to add to the scene, I found this kit was originally released by Heljan as a grain mill! I guess my perception of what the building really looks like was spot-on! Here are photos of my later Life-Like Rapid Recycling kit versus its predecessor Heljan kit from an eBay listing.

N-Circle_21-07-30_Life-Like_GrainMill-1



Heljan-GrainMill_670-1



To begin, I applied a watered-down brown paint wash on the light stone walls and painted the roll-up doors grey. The rear wall of the kit only had a couple of small people doors and windows, but I decided to add a rail dock on that side. Therefore, I cut a hole in the wall with an X-acto knife to insert a roll-up door from another Heljan kit. I cut the hole to place the dock a standard four feet above ground level. I then used sections of the block wall that been cut out to create sidewalls for a loading dock in front of the door, blocks underneath the walls to match the building base and to raise the dock to the same level as the stone walls. The extension of the loading dock allows the building to be spaced back from the track some, so the doorways on the left and right more realistically have some space to the track. I created the decking for the loading dock from a piece of sheet styrene, scoring the surface with a sharp knife to create the look of wood planks before painting it brown. I also added an awning over the door from my detail parts box.

[N-Circle_21-07-30_Life-Like_GrainMill-14](#)



As with other kits, I had to paint the interior of the walls with a wash of dark grey paint, otherwise, light shone through the thin, light-colored walls, and one could see the shadow outline of the backplates around the windows and doors. I also added a floor cut from black

cardboard, so we will see a solid floor looking in through open dock doors. The floor also helps light block gaps in the bottom of the walls due to poor alignment of the kit joints.

(Note the use of a set of rectangular magnets purchased from Radio Shack years ago on my metal cookie sheet to align and hold the cupola sides for gluing. Much less expensive than one of those official sets one can buy!)

[N-Circle_21-07-30_Life-Like_GrainMill-13](#)



I did not use the green roof edging pieces from the kit – they don't add much and would be more architectural complexity than would have been on an old mill like this. I also did not use the chimney, having cut it up use as the base under the added rail loading dock!

I cut out most of the center roll-up door on the truck dock side using an X-acto knife, leaving the two top-most door ribs, so looks like it is not rolled all the way up. Having some open doors makes a building look like it is actually being used.

For the final detailing with Wayne Feeds signs, I used a plastic sign from Blair Line for the rail side, and decals from Dave's Decals for the truck side. Then I added grain sack details on the loading docks. As with the other structures on the N-Circle layout, I will add people figures later when I get to them, and the buildings are more finalized in their placement on the layout.

N-Circle_21-08-14_Life-Like_GrainMill-24

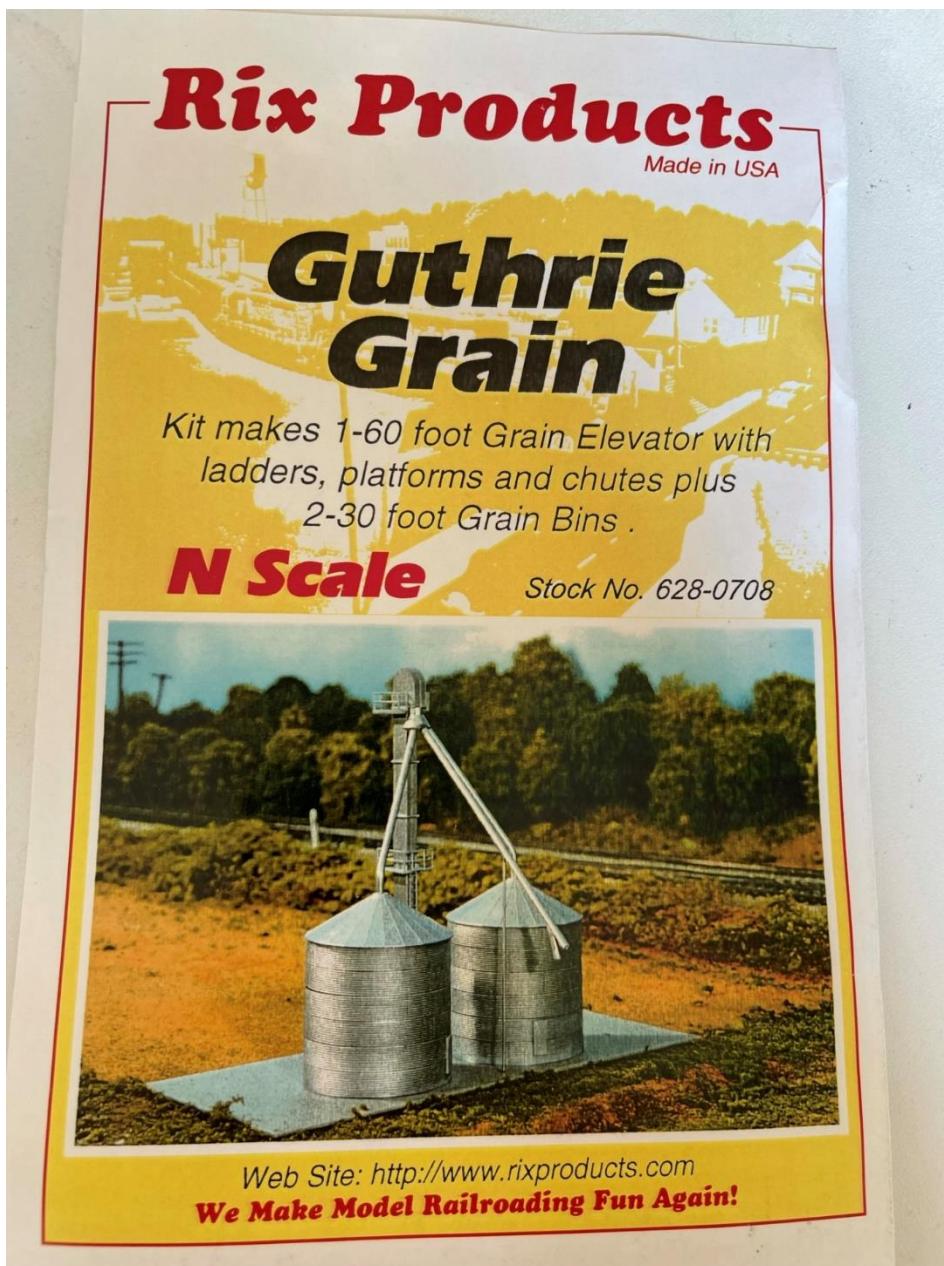


N-Circle_21-08-14_Life-Like_GrainMill-23



After getting part-way through building the mill, I got inspired to add some silos, so I purchased the Rix Products "Guthrie Grain" kit.

[N-Circle_21-08-10_RixProducts_GrainElevator_1](#)



These grain silos are probably too modern for the 1950s, but they helped to create a whole scene, as I will be able to spot a boxcar in front of the mill loading dock, and a covered hopper at the silos. The scene should be fine for the 1980s.

The build for this kit was unnecessarily complex – the 30-foot-high silos are made from six layers of six panels each that all have to be individually aligned and glued! Just providing two half sections like others do with oil storage tanks would seem to be sufficient.

N-Circle_21-08-10_RixProducts_GrainElevator_2



I used a 2 mm thick sheet of styrene for a base for the scene, because the elevator and two silos should be attached firmly to a base in order to have the chutes from the elevator down to the tops of the silos be structurally stable. I drilled holes in the base and used a small file to make a square slot to insert the tab on the bottom of the elevator, to create a more stable gluing attachment.

N-Circle_21-08-10_RixProducts_GrainElevator_3



The loading chutes are very small diameter plastic tubes which have to be bent to align between the elevator head and the silos. The directions say to hold them over a hot soldering iron to soften them at the point to bend. With some care, this technique actually worked well on the first try! I used a section of sprue to add a cross-bar to support the third middle chute for loading trucks.

Here are final photos of the mill and silos together, with the Wayne Feeds semi-trucks added to the scene, and a local farmer picking up some sacks of feed in his pickup truck.

N-Circle_21-08-14_Life-Like_GrainMill-22



N-Circle_21-08-14_Life-Like_GrainMill-25



Old Fire House Restaurant

The Model Power Fire House kit was quite low-end compared to the Fire Station I showed the build for in the April 2021 N-Circle update, so I re-purposed it as two separate buildings, not using the base. The extension will be a small garage to use somewhere else, while the main building will be the “Old Fire House Restaurant.”

The plastic walls in the kit were bright red, so I painted them with boxcar red, then applied a watery layer of white with a little brown mixed in, to fill in the mortar between the bricks. I decided to leave the window frames their original grey plastic, as I wasn’t feeling ambitious enough to painstakingly repaint them all for this “background” structure. I did add thin clear plastic to the insides of the windows – this kit did not come with any window glazing.

The kit does not have any normal doors, just the large garage doors. Therefore, to create a realistic entrance to the restaurant, I cut out one of the doors and refilled it with a piece of sheet styrene, then cut an opening in this for a regular entrance door salvaged from another kit. I painted the doors and sign with “CSX Tan” paint I had on hand, which is basically a dull yellow.

I left off most of the fire station details from the kit, but decided to use the ornate sign on the front, and created a paper “Old Fire House Restaurant” panel to insert into it. The sign was made on a standard computer printer, using a background color behind the black text to match the paint on the sign. I also retained the rooftop bell tower for interest and added a kitchen exhaust vent over the bricked-in opening on the rear, which was originally intended for a raised door. Please ignore that this restaurant does not have a second exit door!

N-Circle_21-08-10_ModelPower_Fire_House_6



N-Circle_21-08-10_ModelPower_Fire_House_4



One kit building technique I often apply is to glue sections cut from sprues of the same color as the walls inside the corners of the buildings to strengthen the corner joints, which are not always perfectly aligned on these lower-end kits. This is especially important for a kit like this, where I did not use the base which would have provided another axis of support, and because buildings on the N-Circle Railroad will be handled for "scene changes" as the layout evolves. I add these shims after the initial gluing of the walls has dried, applying a liberal coat of liquid cement to the shim to insure a strong bond.

[N-Circle_21-08-10_ModelPower_Fire_House_10](#)



I used the same technique on the underside of the door overhangs on the grain mill, as these would surely break off over time with just the thin edges cemented. They are not visible when viewing the structure on the layout.

[N-Circle_21-07-30_Life-Like_GrainMill-16](#)



Here is a final photo of the complete grain mill scene on the layout, with a Rutland hopper unloading at the silos. Note that the Old Fire House Restaurant can be seen on Back Street beyond the mill. Obviously the underlying scenery will need to be integrated around these structures eventually. And I envision setting the restaurant back from the street, with some café tables with umbrellas in front.

N-Circle_21-08-14_Life-Like_GrainMill-26



I may build an unloading shed over the rail hopper at the silos at some point, possibly by modifying a single-engine service shed.

Wayne Feeds was big in the mid-West down through to Texas during the N-Circle Railroad's 1950s and 1980s periods, so it will work for inclusion in the Louisiana Division. I also found there was a large plant in Buffalo, New York, so they were also in the northeast, I don't know if they would have had any small facilities such as this in Vermont...but hey, it's a nice little scene!

Hopefully these two projects have provided some inspiration for what can be done with low-end "throw-away" kits collecting dust around the train room with a little effort and creativity to produce distinctive structures that don't look like the "out-of-the-box" builds on many layouts.

Now, on to the kits I intended to build this summer before this distraction!!