

I design many of my own models by selecting and combining features from a variety of prototypes. That gives them a generic appearance; most could have existed on about 70-percent of the world's railroads. It also allows me to create a "composite" model more visually appealing than any specific original yet correct with respect to prototype practice. My finishing techniques include airbrushing, washes, hand painting, water colors, oil paints, powders, colored pencils, acrylics, water, thinners, and the use of multiple textures.

MODELING THE ROADBED

Narrow gauge roadbed is a real dog's breakfast of weathering and texture. Ties are never the same size, water erodes the roadbed, and the ballast varies in size and color. In some areas, the ballast covers the ties completely; in others, it has washed away.

I begin with a base of half-inch thick, medium density fiberboard with a cork overlay. I use a jigsaw to cut the fiberboard roughly to the width of the ties. In 1:32n2, that

is about 2.5 inches. The cuts are very rough and tend either to extend beyond the width of the ties or to undercut them. I try to smooth the cuts into uniform curves, then use a router with a chamfering bit to plane off the square edges. I apply cork roadbed over the fiberboard to help deaden noise. Cut the cork to follow the profile of the fiberboard sub-roadbed. You might avoid that step if you cut roadbed from fairly thick ceiling tiles.

Use white glue to attach the wooden ties to the cork. My ties are about .125-inch high and of irregular length, especially at turnouts where they tend to be quite long. Sand the tie tops to a uniform height, then distress them with a knife or razor saw. Stain the ties light gray, then add washes of either water- or solvent-based paints to add additional character.

I paint the rail a rust color although some modelers prefer to use a chemical blackener. Either way, I cement a turnout kit's point-frog assembly in place with five minute epoxy, then glue down only one stock rail with the assistance of an On3 track gauge. The second stock rail goes down next and, when you have gauged it, let the glue set. I

