Kitbashing a Korber Models Sanding Tower

By Daniel Dawdy

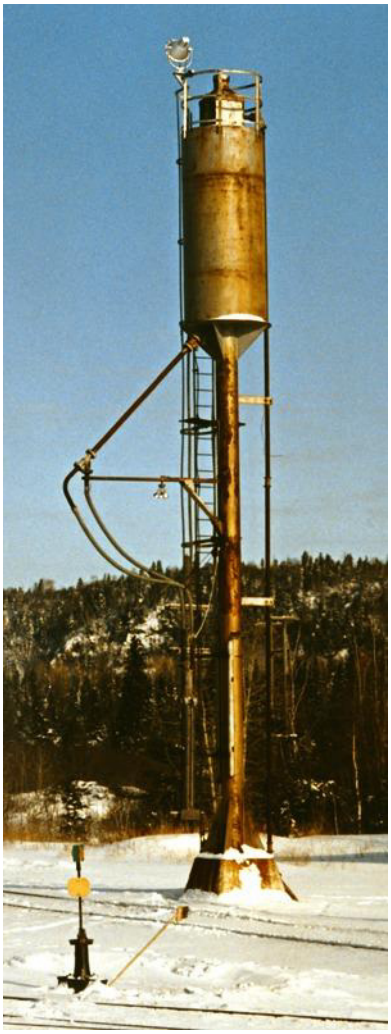
For the open house I had in conjunction with the Chicago O Scale Show this past April, I wanted to get some ground cover, mostly dirt and cinders, around the roundhouse area. Leading into the roundhouse, I have an Ogle coaling tower by Golden Gate Depot. In reality, it's probably too large for this smaller servicing facility, but I like the look. I then bought a cinder hoist from Crescent Locomotive Works. I have a water plug which will give the impression that there is a large tank out of sight. I do not have enough room for a sand dryer complex, so I thought I would get a sand tower and then create a siding to bring in sand by covered hopper a was done in many locations.

I saw that Korber had a sandhouse which I did not have room for, but they also now offered a sanding tower for $25.00. So I ordered the tower, and a few days later had the kit. For the money, it's good basic kit with a PVC tank, well done lasercut tower sections, a tower cap and some wire for piping. If this were to be a background model, I may have built it as is, but it was going to be next to the other buildings close to the front of the layout.

Looking back through my photographs, I found a few pictures of sand towers. One taken in Hawk Junction, Ontario Canada on our way to Hearst for Christmas 1993. The other earlier photo is the CXS ex-C&O yards in Ludington, MI. These pictures gave me an idea of the extra detail I could add to the Korber model.

Korber Models #305A O Scale Sanding Tower

I leaned more toward the Ludington version as it was closer to the Korber model. The first thing was to put the lasercut tower together making sure it was square. This was going to be painted and not stained, otherwise I would have stained before gluing. There was a



Sanding tower in Algoma Central yards, Hawk Junction, Ontario Canada December, 1993.

Sanding tower in CSX yards Ludington, MI. August of 1990.

Figure 1

Figure 2

lasercut round piece of wood for piece of wood for the top. So now that I had the tower built, I set the PCV on the platform and the cover on the top of the PVC. (Figure 1) There was a piece of heavy gauge black coated wire in the kit. To install this, you were to cut a hole in the side of the tank and make a 45 degree bend to represent the fill hose. Here is where I started to add some of my own details.

From a previous project, I had some Plastruct piping pieces in my parts stash. I started by drilling two holes in the tank. One higher for the fill, and the other lower for the sand hose. I glued in a flange (Plastruct F-4), and then glued on a 90 degree elbow (Plastruct E-4) (Figure 2).

Figure 3

Now it was time to work on the tank. I cut a bottom for tank from some scrap styrene using my circle template. (Figure 3) I cut it just a bit larger, glued it to the tank, and once the glue was dry, sanded it to shape. Again, following the Lundington picture, the railing uprights were made from brass wire. Five pieces were cut and one end bent to a 45 degree angle and inserted into holes that I had predrilled into the tank. ACC was used to secure the wires into the tank. The wire extended up about four scale feet from the top of the tank. (Figure 4 next page)

Figure 4

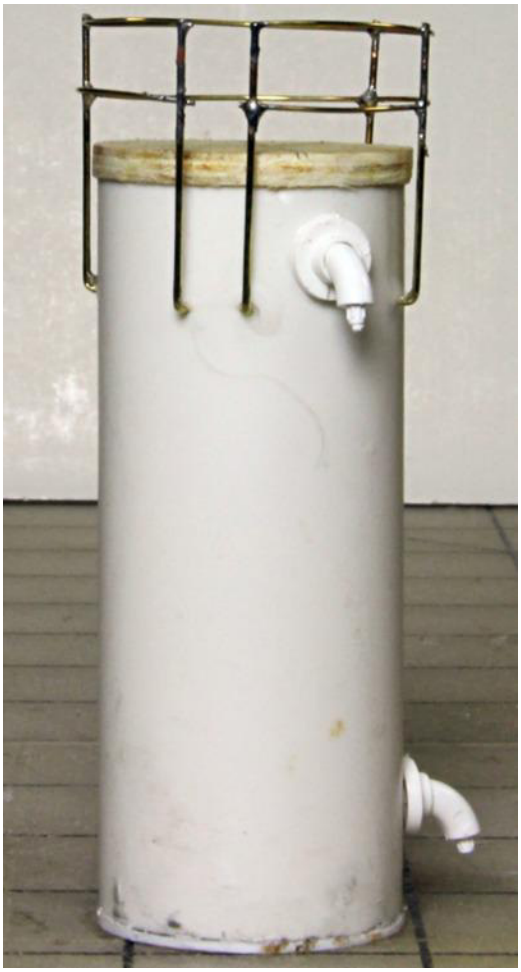


Figure 5

For the railings themselves, I bent some wire around the tank just to get a close shape, then, beginning with the end, soldered the railing to the first upright. After getting it started, it was just a matter of going around the uprights and soldering the railing as I went. This was done twice to complete the railings. (Figure 5)

A ladder was needed and many of you may recognize it as an InterMountain boxcar ladder. Hey, it works and I have a pile of them! The last thing I added were standoffs for the tank using small bits of 1/8" styrene for the legs or standoffs. That completed the tank portion for now. (Figure 6)

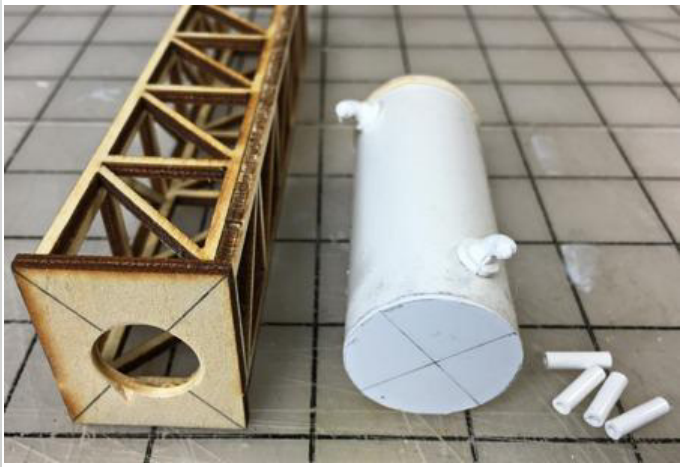
Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 10

The tower itself needed a ladder, and again back to my stash, I found a Plastruct ABS ladder (KL-8) and cut that to fit going up the inside of the tower. (Figure 7)

Figure 8 above and 9 below *show the hole cut into the tank base, along with small pieces of styrene tubing used for the legs or standoffs.*



The kit had a hole cut into the wood for the tank base large enough for a scale man to get through at the top of the ladder. (Figures 8 and 9)

Placing, but not gluing, the finished tank on top you get an idea of the total look of the new tower. (Figure 10

Next, I headed into the paint shop for a covering of engine black. I thought about silver for the tank, but since this is 1947 and sitting in a steam terminal, black won out. Now, the tank can be glued to the top of the tower. Next, I made the fill pipe. To do this, I glued a 90 degree elbow onto the tank, attached a piece of 1/8 tubing (Plastruct TBFS-4) and then used a small piece of heat shrink tubing (green piece) which went down to a flexible rubber tube for filling the locomotives. The rubber tube is just a piece of insulation removed from a 24 gauge wire. (Figure 11 next page)

Figure 11

Now I needed a way for to all of this to fit together and install it. First up was a concrete pad for the tower to sit on. I cut a piece of Bristol board, styrene would also work, and made a scale 8' x 17' pad. These measurements were completely arbitrary to fit my space. The length was to ensure I had room for the fill pipe to drop into the pad, as well as, a small building to house the controls.

I put a thin layer of spackling compound in the board, and not too carefully, smoothed it leaving a few small gouges to show wear. (Figure 12) Using a straight edge, I pressed it on the still soft spackling to represent expansion joints. (Figure 13) Once dried, it was painted Old Concrete from my Floquil paint stash.

Figure 12

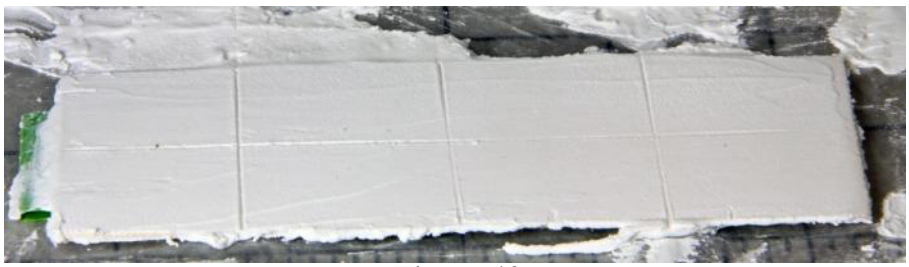


Figure 13

A small building was needed for the controls as the sand would come in on covered hoppers and then dump into a pit to be drawn up into the tank. Back to the scrap box, I found some grooved siding. Using 2’ x 2’ scale lumber supports were glued inside to square it making a about a 4’ x 4’ x 7’ scale foot building. I framed the door with strip wood and stained it. I then used paper for hinges with small holes poked into it with a pin for screw holes, used a piece of wood for a door handle, and finished it off with a piece of corrugated metal for the roof. (Figures 14, 15 and 16)

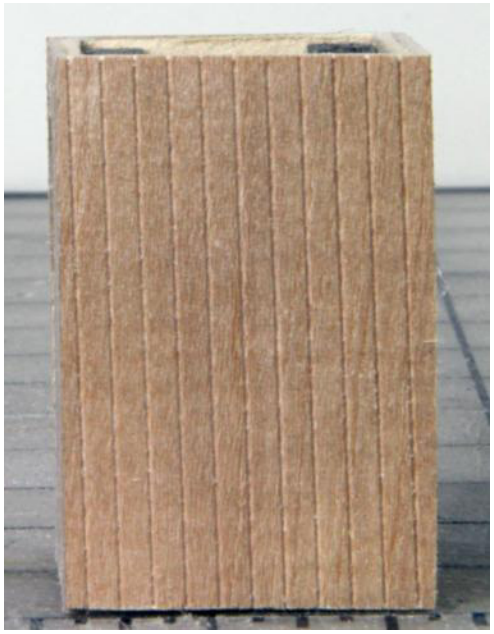


Figure 14

Figure 15

Figure 16

That about wraps it up. The concrete pad was glued in place on the layout and held down with weights until dry. Another flange was added to the pad for the intake pipe to attach to as seen on the next page. Add some trash, oil barrels or other details you want to the pad to make it more interesting. Is this a one hundred percent accurate replica of a sanding tower? No, but it is a good inexpensive alternative and allows even a beginner to kitbash with very little cost.

Engine servicing area. No 203 has just come off the turntable and is heading out for helper service. Now I just need to cover the bricks and scenic the background.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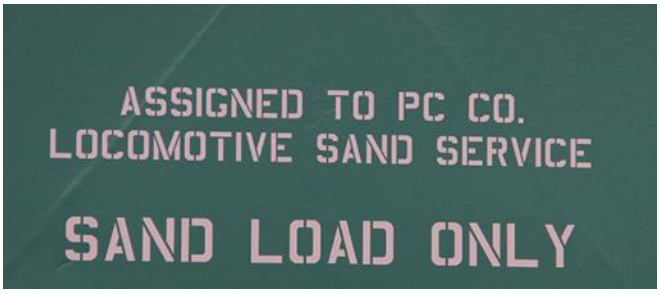

While visiting the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania a few months ago, I saw this example of a car in sand use. Although much newer and cleaner than what I was modeling, it shows they were indeed used into more modern times than my 1947.