# GETTING REAL column

Model Railroad Hobbyist | August 2018 | #102

RATE THIS ARTICLE

**TONY THOMPSON** EXAMINES LOADING AND UNLOADING FREIGHT AT THE "UNIVERSAL DESTINATION" ...

**THE TEAM TRACK WAS AND IS A VERY VERSATILE** facility for any railroad, because of its flexibility of use. It is also a great convenience for many shippers and receivers of goods, who need not have their own railroad siding but can simply pick up or deliver cargo at the railroad's team track.

Moreover, it is important to recognize that practically any cargo can be loaded or unloaded at a team track. Conventional cargo in boxes, barrels, cartons or sacks is already packaged and readily moved. Cargo like lumber can be loaded or unloaded, though more laboriously. Even liquids and bulk cargoes like cement, sand or coal can be loaded or unloaded at team tracks, given the right equipment to do so.

As one example, lumber in box cars would have been unloaded board by board [1]. Finished or milled lumber was usually transported in box cars, while the modeler's typical lumber load on a flat car would usually represent rough or unmilled lumber. An

MODELING REAL RAILROADS AND WHAT THEY DO

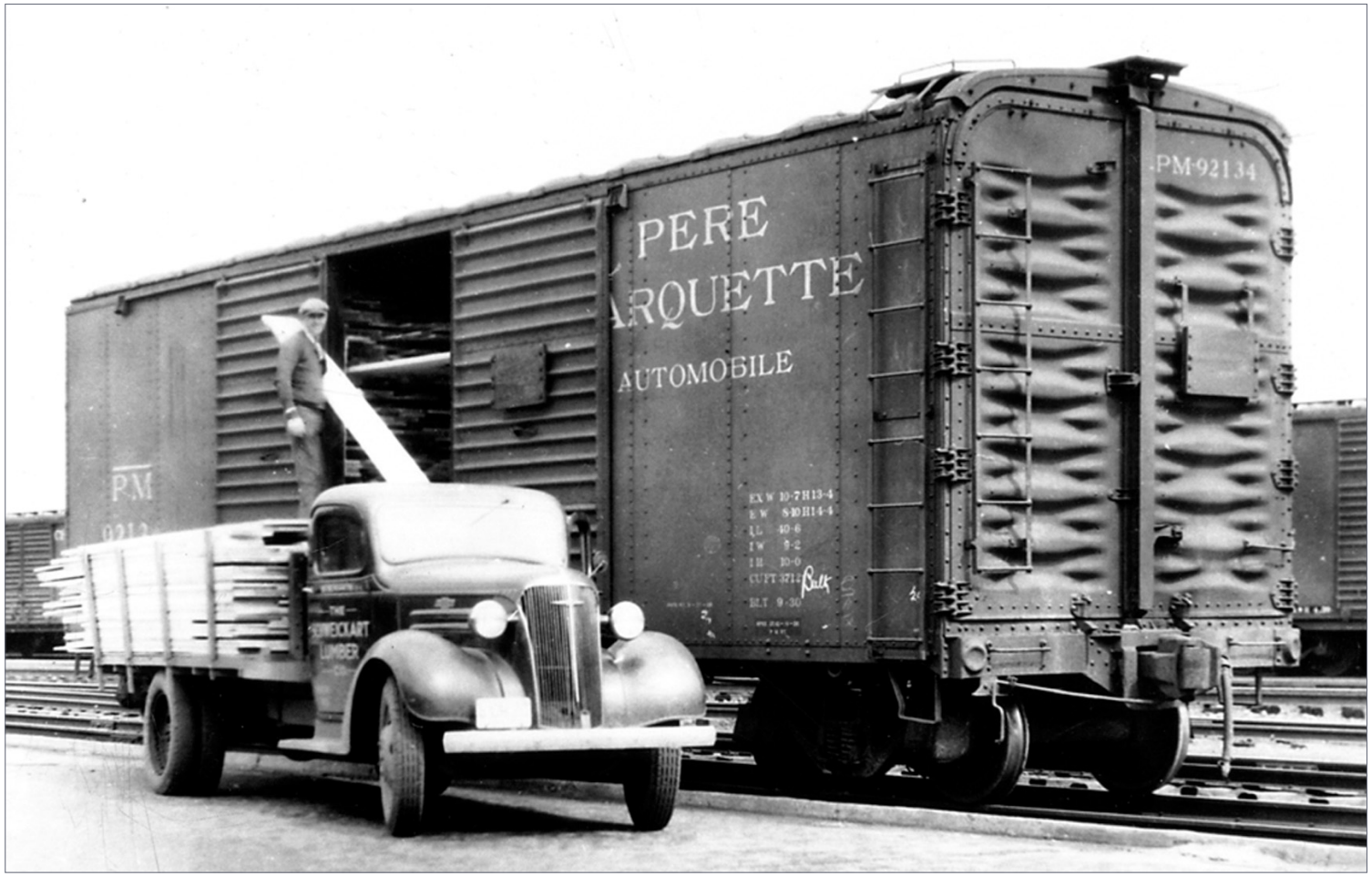
automobile car, with double doors, was preferred for ease of loading and unloading lumber.

To illustrate handling of liquids, one example would be using a truck with onboard pumping equipment, or perhaps only gravity unloading. Milk unloading [2] is one instance of this. Bulk



materials could also be handled at team tracks, though without an unloading trestle, it would require hand labor to do so [3] if the railcar had no special unloading capability such as drop-bottom doors.

Naturally, *loading* of freight cars was equally practical at a team track, requiring only transporting the cargo to the siding, and some means of getting the cargo into the car(s). This would be simplest with a cargo that was discrete units, instead of bulk material [4]. And if an area produced perishables but did not have a long enough harvest season or was not busy enough to have a packing house, it is amply documented that farmers would come to a team track to deliver their crop directly into refrigerator cars [5].




1. Lumber is unloaded board by board from a 40-foot automobile car on a team track at Ashland, Kentucky, about 1940. A single employee of Schweikart Lumber is loading the truck. Inside the car can be seen the lumber remaining in that end. *C&O Historical Society*

Some of the photos shown here as examples are clearly related to rural areas. But it was also true that most big cities had extensive team track facilities. All kinds of cargo was unloaded at such places, and of course could also be loaded there. Big cities usually had a produce terminal which was largely of a team-track character, as in the New York example shown in [6].

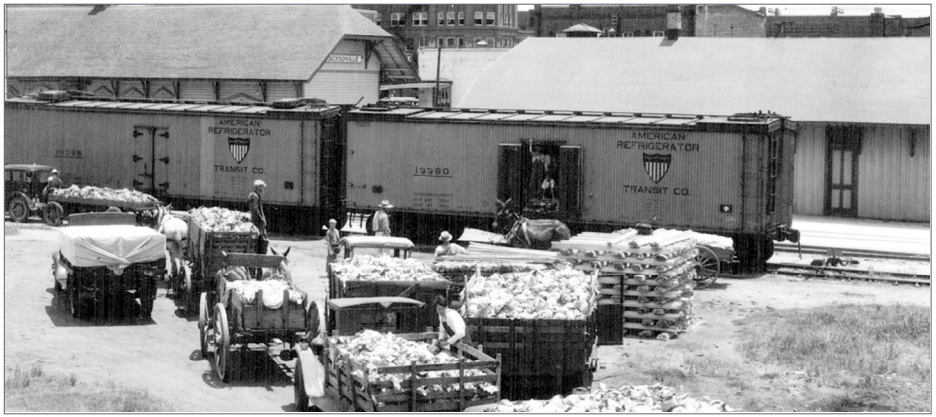

2. One of the famous Borden's "butter dish" milk cars is being unloaded into a truck alongside a team track, in this view from New York. The milk trailer has all that is needed for this job. *New York Central photo, courtesy Jim Seagrave*





3. Even bulk materials could be unloaded at team tracks, as in this photo of workmen shoveling sand out of gondolas into trucks alongside. Date and location unknown but age of the trucks suggests late 1940s or thereafter. *Richard Hendrickson collection*


4. Cargo could also be loaded at team tracks, of course. Here cable reels are about to be loaded into a box car, on the team track at Novato, California, in March 1960. This trailer was called a "Hi-Lo" by its owner, Pacific Motor Trucking, a Southern Pacific subsidiary. *Southern Pacific photo*




5. This photo from the 1930s shows farmers, some with mule teams (thus the term "team track"), bringing lettuce for loading at the team track by the International-Great Northern depot in Jacksonville, Texas. (I-GN was a Missouri Pacific subsidiary.) Lettuce is being loading directly into the American Refrigerator Transit Co. reefers. For more about A.R.T.'s cars, see the Maher, et al. book in the Bibliography. *Gordon Higgins photo, Tony Wilson collection, courtesy Gene Semon*



A team track can involve nothing more than a track segment bordered by a parking area of dirt or paving, and when team tracks are near depots, that is usually how they are arranged. But when a team track is located some distance from a depot or freight house, it may be desirable to provide a platform to facilitate unloading, and sometimes even a small freight shelter.

On my railroad, I provided a team track in each town I modeled. Two of them are near depots and thus would have no separate platforms or shelters. An example is shown later in this article. But in one town, the team track is some ways from the depot. I decided I should add a platform and shelter to provide better service to customers.

I model Southern Pacific, so I would like to model an SP structure. Some good examples of SP small shelters like this can be found in


6. These team tracks, paired with driveways on both sides of the tracks, were at New York Central's 30th Street yard in New York City in 1957. Note that the nearer pair of tracks at photo center contain all produce-type refrigerator cars, while the track beyond them is filled with meat reefers. detail of a *Jim Shaughnessy photo*

Henry Bender's book about SP depots (see Bibliography). Some of them were truly small structures atop platforms little bigger than the shelter.

Let me show some examples. In several cases, the SP small freight depots were something like 10 x 10 feet, often on a platform not a great deal bigger. One example, the facility at Ingomar, California, [7], was an 11 x 11-foot shelter structure on a platform about 14 x 20 feet (exclusive of the ramp). Another one [8], at Los Guilicos, was of similar size. Both look quite dark inside, suggesting that they had no windows.


7. This example of a small SP freight shelter was at Ingomar, California, in the Central Valley north of Los Banos. The edge of the sliding door is just visible inside the door jamb. This photo is from Chapter 3 of Bender's book (see Bibliography), which covers standard SP freight house designs. *SP photo, Vernon Sappers collection, Western Railway Museum*



I decided to scratchbuild one of these simple structures and freight platforms. To do so, I used techniques similar to the ones I described and illustrated in my column about an SP depot, in *Model Railroad Hobbyist* in the issue for November 2012 (see Bibliography).

## Materials

Like many Southern Pacific structures, these small freight sheds are sheathed with what SP called "rustic siding," similar to modeler's commercial shiplap siding, offered by Evergreen among others. One of the Evergreen sheets of this kind is 0.040 inches thick and has siding widths of 0.083 inches (thus the part number, 4083). That board width translates to about 7.25 inches in HO scale, close enough to the SP prototype's use of 8-inch siding.

These structures also had shingled roofs, as were applied to many SP structures. I used the large Pikestuff sheet, part 1015. Last are the trim boards at the corners and around the doorway. Scaling from the photograph shows that these sheds have about 1 x 6-inch trim boards.

For the freight platform, I chose scribed styrene for this kind of loading dock, which is built of planks. For this platform, I selected Evergreen sheet styrene No. 4100. This is a V-groove material, 0.040 inches thick and with 0.100-inch groove spacing. This is about 3 scale inches thick and about 9 inches wide, a realistic size.

The V-groove in this material is an exaggeration, since the prototype would not be grooved, but it helps provide definition to the planks, and also can be used to show the wear of such planking, often notable at plank edges. The platform material will be distressed to indicate use.

Platforms of this kind are typically between three and four feet high. I chose a scale height of 3 feet, 8 inches high. The photos [7, 8] show

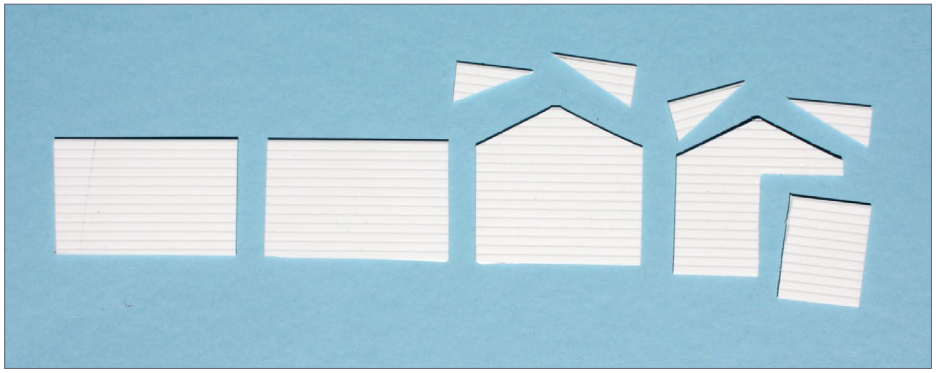
trim boards at top and bottom of the platform, but photos of SP loading docks in later years often show that one or both of these trim boards were missing. I decided to do the same, and omit bottom trim.

Southern Pacific docks often had an incline or ramp to facilitate use by vehicles which might need to move onto the dock. My study of SP prototype loading dock ramps shows them to have a slope of anywhere from 1:3 to 1:5. I chose an intermediate ratio of a bit less than 1:4 here.

In addition to the sheet material, I used several sizes of Evergreen styrene strip in this project, primarily 1/8-inch square strips for corner reinforcement, and scale 1 x 6-inch trim, but also a few other sizes as are noted in the sections below on construction and assembly.

8. The freight shelter at Los Guilicos, California, north of Kenwood on the Santa Rosa Branch, in a 1912 photo from Bender's book. This 10 x 12-foot shed stood on a 16 x 20-foot platform, not counting the ramp. *SP photo, Shasta Division Archives*





9. These are the side and end walls of the freight shelter, cut from Evergreen Novelty Siding, sheet 4083. The roof corner pieces may appear to be scrap, but will be used as roof formers when the roof is constructed. The door opening in one end is evident.

Though I don't have a drawing for this shed, I do know the footprint from information about the Ingomar and Los Guilicos examples [7, 8]. The side walls scale out to about 7 feet, 6 inches high, and the height of the peak of the front and back walls scales out as 10 feet. Moreover, the proportions match well with the drawings for a standard SP section tool house and several other small SP structures of a similar kind. For examples, see the Petty volumes listed in the Bibliography. Other details, such as roof pitch, roof overhang dimensions, and so forth, can also be gleaned from these drawings.

## Construction

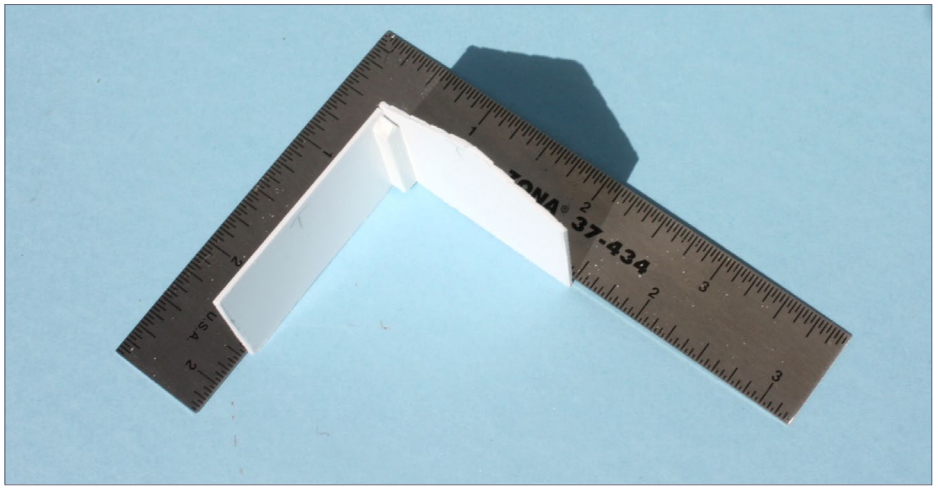
For structures like this, I like to work in styrene, with 0.040-inch thickness making a good self-supporting building. Both my freight shelter and its dock were built with material of this thickness.

I laid out wall sections of the shelter on the back of the Evergreen Novelty Siding 4083 sheet. Scribing the layout lines with a hobby

knife blade and then snapping the pieces apart was quick and easy. An accompanying photo [9] shows the first parts, which were quite close in dimensions to my description of the Ingomar shed. I laid out five pieces: two ends, two sides, and the freight door that goes on the front wall.

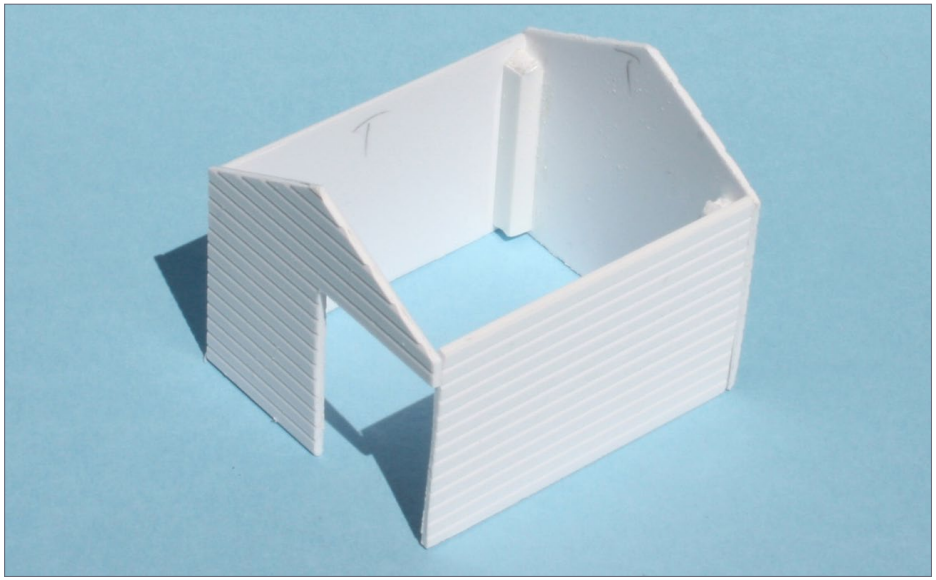
The roof pitch in small SP structures like this varies from as low as 1:4 upwards to 1:3 and sometimes steeper. I chose a steep pitch like the photos [7, 8]. I chose to model a sliding door, which is what appears to have been used on the Ingomar shelter [7]. This door, of course, could be modeled as an open door, or partly open, or closed.

For structures like this, I like to use square styrene strip inside the corners to strengthen them and help to get them square. I often use Evergreen 1/8-inch square strip for this. A small square is essential in getting each corner correctly joined [10].




10. Here the back end and one side wall of the freight shelter have been joined, using styrene cement and a piece of 1/8-inch square strip inside, to strengthen the corner and assist in making it a 90-degree corner. A small square is a vital tool for assembly of each corner.





11. The entire freight shelter is shown, with reinforcement styrene strip in three of the corners. The front corner at the right of the door opening will receive an additional board to form the door jamb.

Once all four walls are joined, the structure is ready for paint. I will address painting in a following section. But note in [11] that the corner by the door opening has no corner reinforcement. Instead, I added a piece of 0.040 x 0.080 strip to that location.

Sliding doors that Southern Pacific applied to depots, section houses, motor car sheds, and tool houses all had the same general design. They were board-built with cross-pieces attached. A door for this structure was built that way too.

The roof of the shelter relies on the Pikestuff shingle material as the structural base, as it is fairly thick. Photographs of SP small structures like this, such as section houses or motor car sheds, and drawings where available (see Bibliography), show that typical practice was about a 12-inch overhang front and back, and

about a foot on the sides. Knowing this, one can take one's structure and simply measure accordingly to create a roof with those characteristics.

As I usually do with roofs, I made formers for the inside to ensure that the roof angle matches the structure end angles. I use the left-over triangles of styrene remaining after the building ends are cut [9]. These are glued back to back and reinforced with a small piece of styrene strip [12].

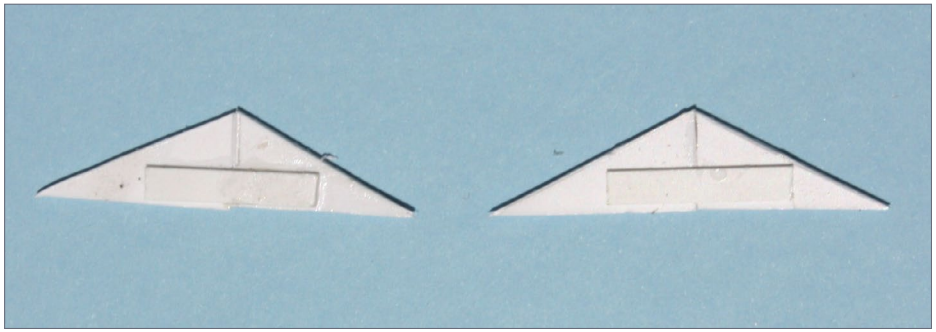
Formers are also valuable if the roof is to be removable, though this one need not be. If it is not removable, would it not be simpler to just glue the roof sheets to the building? Yes, but with a separate roof structure, as shown in [13], it is easy to paint its own color. The roof edges seen in [13] need not be refined, as they will be covered with 1 x 6-inch trim boards.

Next, the loading dock itself. The Evergreen no. 4100 V-groove sheet was made into dock parts by the same scribe-and-snap method, resulting in the pieces shown in [14]. Note that the incline or ramp support portion was made by first cutting a rectangle of appropriate length and height, then dividing it diagonally to make the two ramp supports.

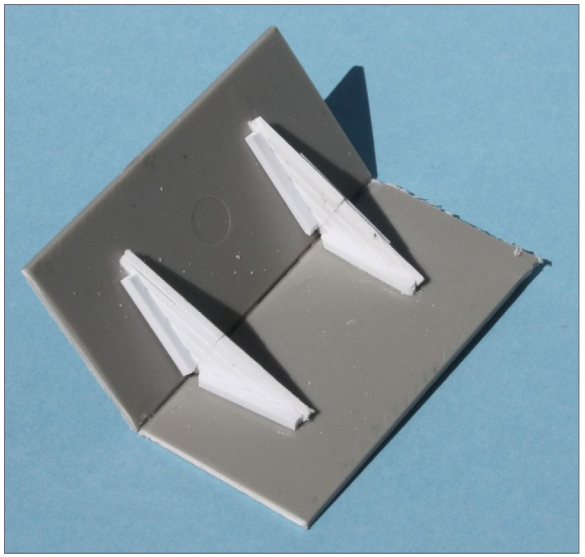
The process of dock construction is much like the shelter building already shown. I connected the sides and end, reinforcing the corners with the use of a small square to ensure right angles [15]. Then the platform was added [16], followed by the ramp sides. The technique here is to glue the ramp sides to the bottom of the ramp, then set the dock on a flat surface to ensure that the bottom of the ramp sides will align with the platform sides.

I did feather the end of the ramp so that it will appear to rest on the ground. The dock at this point is shown in [17]. It's worth mentioning that the exact dimensions here are flexible, and a dock of any size could be made.

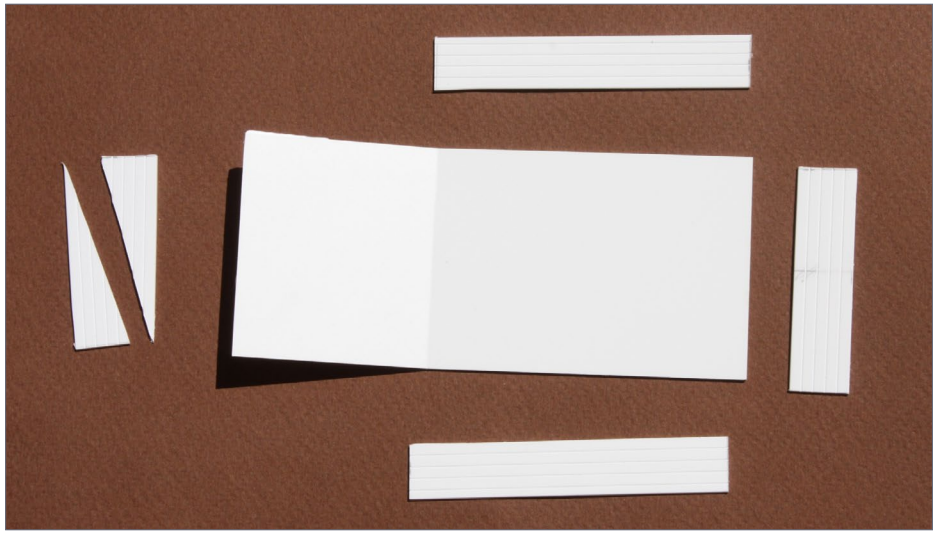




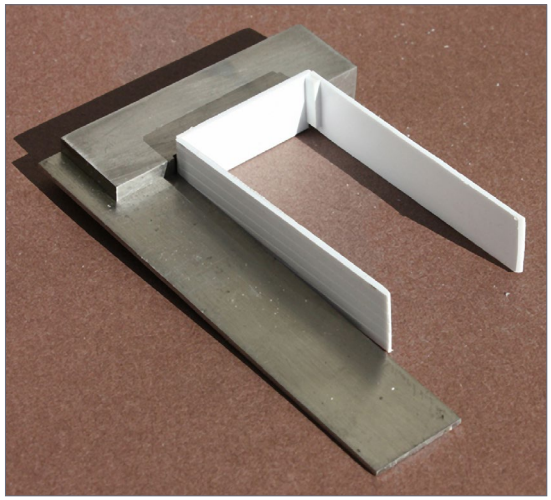
12. Roof formers, made from the triangular off-cuts from the shelter end pieces. They are butt-glued together and reinforced with a length of styrene strip.



13. The roof formers shown in [12] have been glued inside the roof sheets of Pikestuff shingles. Short pieces of scale 6 x 6-inch styrene strip have been used to reinforce the joints between the formers and the roof sheets. This arrangement ensures a correct angle of the roof sheets. The 6 x 6 reinforcements are on the opposite side of the formers from the splice strips seen in [12]. Because the roof material appears to be ABS rather than styrene,they were glued to the roof with Plastruct "Plastic Weld" cement.

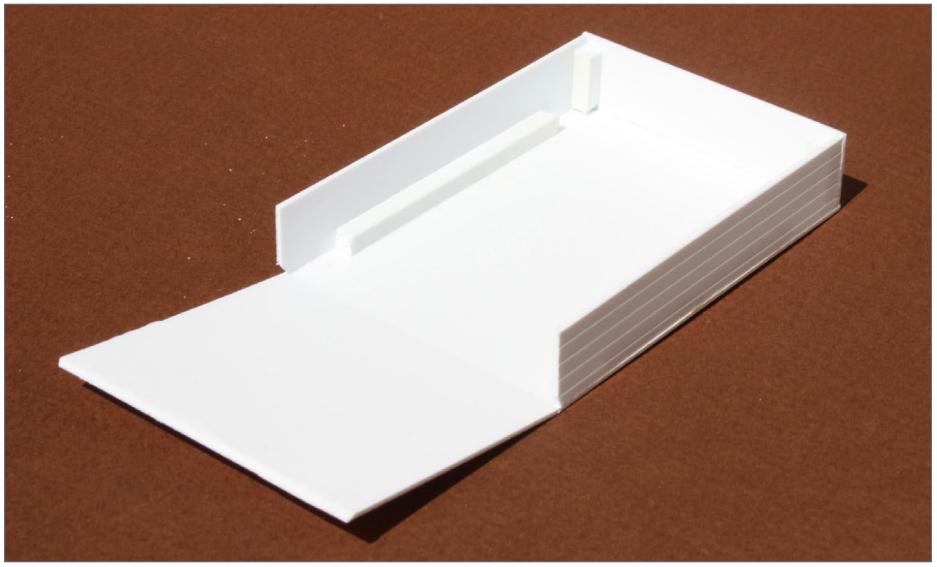


14. The loading dock parts, all cut from Evergreen 4100 sheet: two rectangular sides, an end, the inclined ramp sides (the triangles), and the top of the platform and ramp. Notice that the platform and ramp are all one piece, lightly scribed and gently bent to shape.

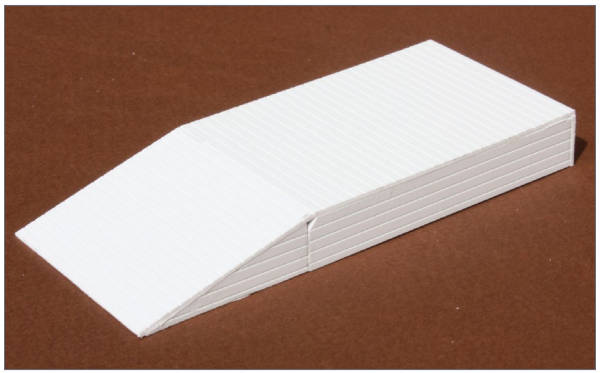


15. Assembling the sides of the dock to the end, again with corner reinforcement strips of styrene and using a small machinist's square to make sure corners are at 90 degrees.





16. With the sides and end assembled, the platform can be attached, using corner reinforcements as before. This makes a solid construction for the dock. Ramp side supports remain to be added. It isn't necessary to make the ramp and platform all one piece, but it simplifies a good match at what would otherwise be a very visible joint.



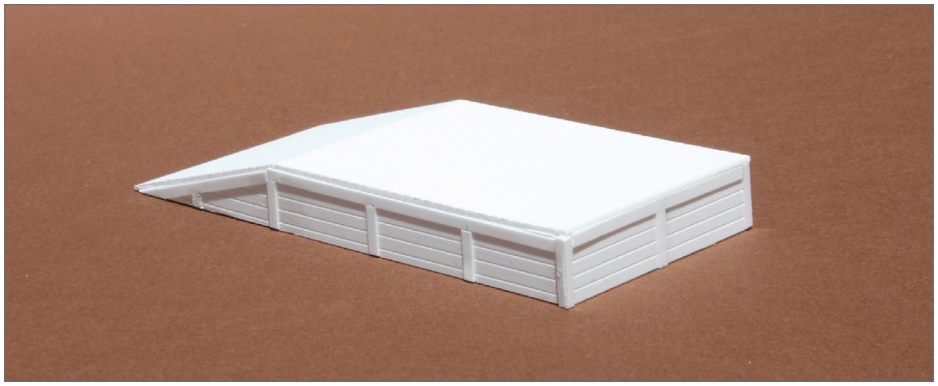
17. The assembled dock, with ramp bent down and glued to the ramp support triangles. A splice plate is glued inside the joint of the side and the ramp triangle. Vertical trim boards will be applied, including one that will cover the joint at the side-ramp junction.

My last construction step for the dock was to add the trim boards, which are very evident in the prototype photos [7, 8]. These appear wider than the trim boards on the shed which are known to be 1 x 6-inch boards, so my choice for the dock trim boards was scale 1 x 8-inch styrene strip.

Finally, I distressed the platform and ramp by gouging and scraping the surface, and by dragging the corner of a razor blade in some of the plank grooves to widen them. I also nicked some of the board ends. The surface was lightly sanded to remove burrs, then gone over with coarser sandpaper to give texture to the surface. This completed the basic dock [18].

## Painting and final assembly

I have touched on assembly of the basic parts of this structure above, but final assembly was postponed until after painting. Accordingly, that aspect is treated next.



18. The trim boards were added to the loading dock in the form of scale 1 x 8-inch styrene strip. Some SP prototype docks have the same 1 x 6-inch trim boards as the building usually does. The bottom trim board was omitted, as was true in many cases in later years for SP structures.



19. The freight shelter structure was spray painted with Colonial Yellow. You can see the reinforcement strip that was added inside the building corner by the door. This definitely stiffened the building.

In the transition era, Southern Pacific structures like this that were used by or visible to the public were painted in a standard scheme of Colonial Yellow as a body color, with a color called Light Brown for trim boards. Roofs of SP buildings were usually shingled and painted Moss Green. These colors are described in an appendix to Henry Bender's book (Bibliography).

All three colors have been produced by Tru-Color Paint with the guidance of surviving SP Color Drift panels for those three colors. The SP Colonial Yellow color is also very close to the Star Brand Paint called "R.G.S. Depot Buff," and that could be used if desired. See the Materials list for details. Another point is that an acceptable version of Light Brown can be made by mixing a dark brown ( for example the old Floquil "Roof Brown") with white, two parts of brown to one of white.

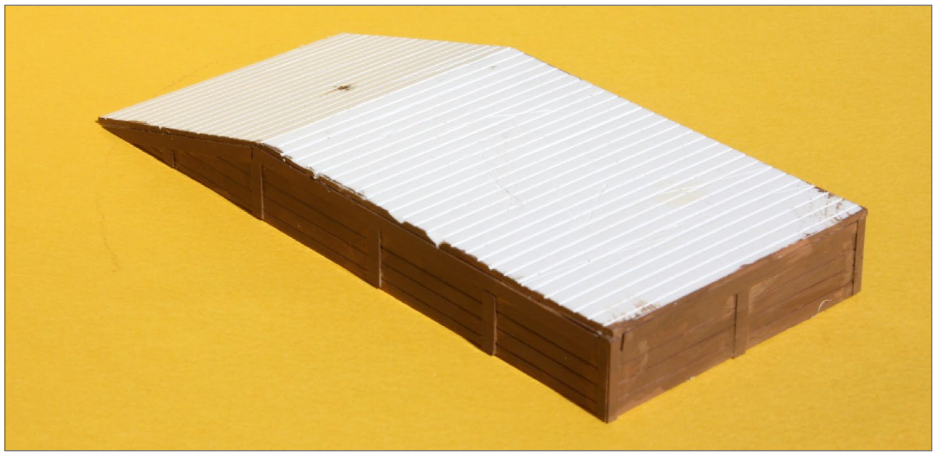
My first painting step was to airbrush the shelter building, as it is, without any trim boards, with Colonial Yellow [19]. Whatever kind of door has been chosen should also be painted Colonial Yellow at this time, as a base color.

Then I sprayed Light Brown on not only the dock sides and end, but also on some Evergreen scale 1 x 6-inch styrene strip to use as

trim boards. A small point to observe: all the trim boards at the corners and periphery of the structure, around the door, and at all roof edges adds up to a considerable length. I sprayed two full 14-inch lengths of the Evergreen 1 x 6-inch styrene. Here is the dock at this point [20].

There is no need to paint the platform or ramp of the dock at this point. SP dock platforms normally were not painted, but of course the exposure to weather and dirt did alter their look from the original fresh-wood appearance. I used the technique I use for flatcar decks, beginning with an overspray of clear flat so that water-base paints won't bead up on the surface, then using a mix of acrylic tube paints in Neutral Gray, Black, and Burnt Umber on a palette, varying the ratios of the mix in different areas of the dock [21].

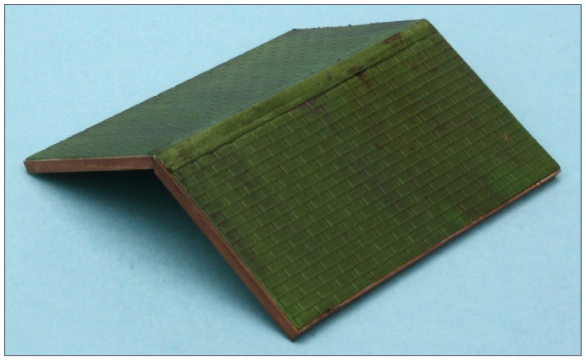
I added a narrow paper strip along the ridge of the roof to represent flashing and of course, cover any gaps between the two roof



20. Southern Pacific Light Brown was used to paint the sides and end of the loading dock, as was usual SP practice. The top of the platform and ramp were left unpainted and are to be weathered much like a flatcar deck, using acrylic tube paints.



21. The top surface of the loading dock platform and ramp was weathered with acrylic tube paints mixed in varying ratios of Neutral Gray, Black, and Burnt Umber, so that the color varies from place to place.



22. The completed roof, with ridge flashing strip made from paper, and Light Brown trim boards all around. The shingle material is a Pikestuff product (see Materials list). Light weathering has been added.

sheets. I use canopy glue to attach this because its tacky nature helps to position the piece. Then I painted the assembled roof Moss Green, using the Tru-Color version. Usually SP roof painting included any flashing, giving an overall uniform roof color.

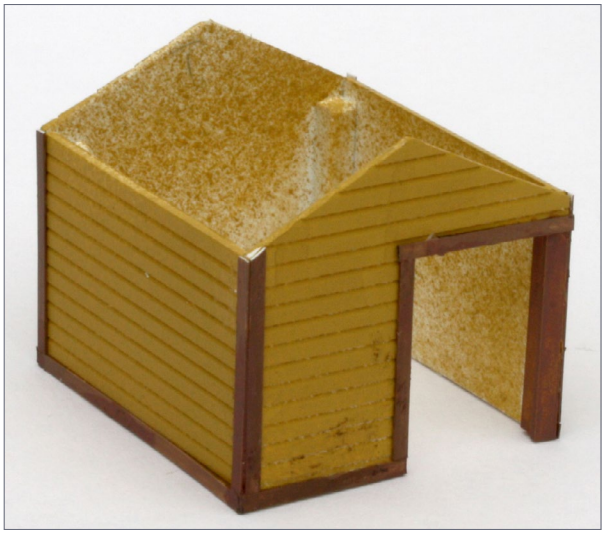
Trim boards cover the entire perimeter of the shed roof, as can be seen in the prototype photos [7, 8]. On rafter ends, this is usually called a fascia. In SP practice, the underside of rafter ends was

closed (making a soffit) only when climate was adverse enough to require that. In temperate locations, soffits were omitted. In the model, of course, soffits would be hard to observe and could certainly be omitted regardless of location. I added the Light Brown 1 x 6-inch trim boards around the roof edges [22].

Next, the Light Brown trim boards need to be fitted to each of the building corners and around the door, and glued in place. I like to use canopy glue for this, not only because it doesn't attack paint, but also it is tacky right away and helps with quick attachment of trim boards. The same tacky quality was helpful for assembly of the paper flashing on the plastic roof sheet, prior to painting.

Note in the prototype photos [7, 8] that the trim along the bottom of the walls was installed first, and the building corner trim is above it. One of the prototype sheds has trim boards at the tops of walls, under the roof overhang; the other appears not to have them. I chose to omit them.

With the trim boards in place, it was evident that the door jamb surfaces needed to be touched up with Light Brown, along with



23. In this view, the trim boards have been installed and the door jamb touched up with Light Brown. A little dirt has been added also. The interior has not yet been painted dark gray.



the edge of the door. This was done with a brush after all trim boards were in place. The completed trim board placement, along with the door jamb touchup, can be seen in [23].

The door was made like the doors on many SP depot and other structures, with trim boards around its perimeter and at the half height of the door. To see this style in prototype and model form, you may wish to look at my *MRH* article from November 2012.

I decided to model the sliding door of this shed as partly open. This is easy to do, as the door, once completed with its trim boards, is simply glued (once again, with canopy glue) behind the end wall, with the desired amount of opening. I show this arrangement of the door in [24] and have also painted the visible interior wall dark gray, so it is not attention-getting when viewed.

In use on the layout, this partly open door would help justify the presence of a model figure of a workman, along with boxes, barrels, or other freight on the platform.

The shed, when complete, can be glued to the platform and the roof can be glued on. If some flexibility is desired in arrangements, such as freight items to be located near an open door, the shed can be left unglued and simply placed on the platform as desired. I chose not to glue it down. The entire assembly, as I plan to use it, is what is shown in [24].

The prototype photos [7, 8] show one of the sheds with a name board along the roof ridge, and the other one without. I would surmise that the name board was unnecessary in an otherwise well recognized locality, but if the shed was located away from a town or depot, it might need to have an identifying name. Since on my layout this shed is in a switching area, I conclude that it needs no name board, and I didn't make one. But these boards are easy to make, using the dimensions given in the drawing I included in my article on building an SP depot.

In use, this freight shelter is alongside the team track area in my layout town of Shumala, specifically in the switching area called East Shumala [25]. The depot is not in this area, so the shelter is appropriate for this location. This team track has a parking area alongside the highway and thus an area for trucks to load or unload at this location.

My other towns have more conventional team track arrangements, being located near the town depot [26]. This was common on the SP.

## Concluding comment

This small shed and dock project provides a logical shelter for freight unloaded at my team track, when the load is not destined to the care of the agent in the depot. The same could be true for any layout team track which might need one, and provides more of

24. The completed dock with the freight shelter in place. Dock sides as well as the shelter itself have been weathered a little. This view of the model was chosen to resemble the prototype photos [7, 8].




25. The completed freight shelter alongside the team track at East Shumala. This team track is some distance from the Shumala depot and thus merits a freight shelter of its own.

26. This is a conventional team track, separated from the house track and depot loading platform by a paved space for trucks. Since it is adjacent to the depot in my layout town of Ballard (out of view to the right), it needs no shelter or separate platform.

a railroad presence at such team tracks. The Southern Pacific prototypes might well serve the needs of modelers of other railroads, in the absence of information about specific structures used by those roads. ☑



## BILL OF MATERIALS

- Evergreen styrene sheet, Novelty Siding, no. 4083.
- Evergreen styrene sheet, V-groove, no. 4100.
- Evergreen scale 1 x 6-inch strip styrene, no. 8106.
- Evergreen scale 1 x 8-inch strip styrene, no. 8108.
- Evergreen scale 6 x 6-inch strip styrene, no. 8606.
- Evergreen styrene strip, 1/8-inch square, no. 186.
- Rix Pikestuff shingle roof sheet, no. 1015.
- Tru-Color Paint, TCP-153, "SP Depot Colonial Yellow;" or Star Brand Paints, no. STR-07, "R.G.S. Depot Buff"
- Tru-Color Paint, TCP-163, "SP Depot Trim Brown"
- Tru-Color Paint, TCP-164, "SP Depot Moss Green" ■



## Bibliography

Bender, Henry, *Southern Pacific Lines Standard Design Depots,* Signature Press, Berkeley and Wilton, CA, 2013.

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