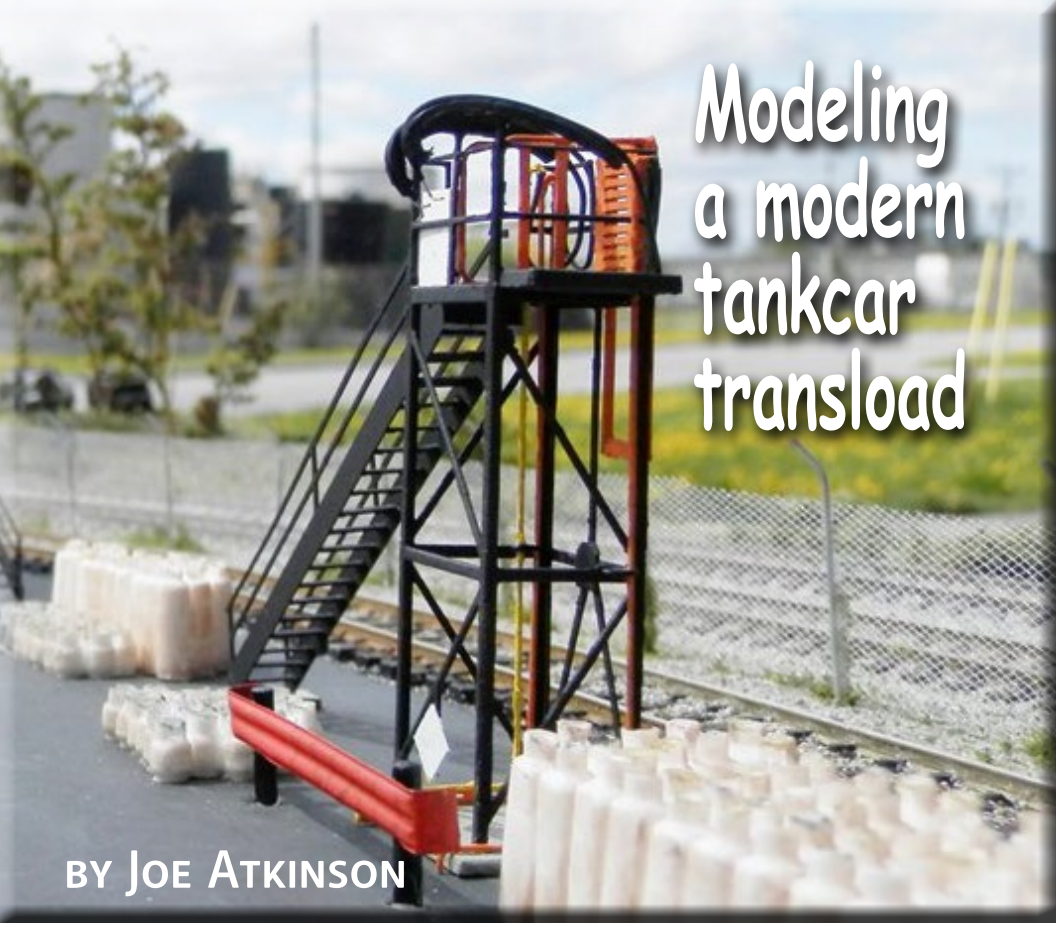

# Modeling a modern tankcar transload

BY JOE ATKINSON

## *Modeling a compact prototype with a simple kitbash ...*

1. The stock kit from the GLX web site, glxscalemodels.com/craftsman-structure-kits. GLX photo.

**RECENTLY I FINISHED CONSTRUCTION OF A GLX** Scale Models, glxscalemodels.com, railcar transfer tower kit, including some alterations that better fit my prototype. Built according to the GLX instructions, it represents a propane transfer facility. However, I found it to also be a good starting point for modeling an anhydrous ammonia transload facility on my prototype, Tanner Industries at Council Bluffs, Iowa, as the overall look is very similar. The GLX kit makes a great structure for modeling a customer in a smaller space, only requiring about an inch of real estate depth adjacent to the spur track right-of-way.

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## Construction

I built the GLX kit largely according to the instructions, with the stairs on the left side as viewed from the track, but I made the following modifications:

1. Removed the platform extension opposite the stairway.

2. Built a new control box on the platform.

3. Built new drawbridge handrails to represent the collapsible type seen on the Tanner Industries prototype.

4. Left off the hose brackets and HAZMAT placard that are included in the kit, since neither is found on the prototype I am modeling.

5. Removed the horizontal tie braces from the tower and added X-bracing using 0.020”x0.030” styrene.

## Sticking a sock in it

An important detail in the Tanner facility is the windsock, used to indicate wind direction in case of an ammonia spill. But how to model it? My solution was to take a piece of tissue paper, wrap

it around a steel uncoupling skewer, and then soak it with either diluted white glue or hairspray. Both methods worked equally well, and after sitting overnight to dry, both slipped right off the skewer. The "tail" was bent downward to reflect a relatively calm day, and a staff was made from wire stock. I think the completed windsock [5] adds a lot to the scene, and it definitely helps to tell the story of what the facility is about.

## Conclusion

Tank car transfer facilities like this are common for both propane (LPG) and anhydrous ammonia, with variants from single-car facilities to a dozen or more cars with multiple towers. The GLX kit makes a nice starting point, and while it's not a quick build, it's a great option for those who prefer not to scratchbuild an unloading facility.


2. My prototype, the Tanner Industries anhydrous ammonia transfer at Council Bluffs, Iowa.




3. The completed Tanner transfer tower.

4. The changes made to the kit's bracing. The footprint of the GLX tower is very compact, making it ideal for small spaces.


5. Overhead view of the tower showing the scratchbuilt windsock, control box, and drawbridge handrails. Future plans call for wheel stops, fencing, an office trailer, and more detailing for the Tanner facility.

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## JOE ATKINSON

Joe Atkinson manages a software support team for a global electronic payments software provider. He and wife Kim have two grown children.

Joe's other interests include bicycling, playing with his Golden Retrievers, and Bible study.