Prototype Scene Modeling Notes: Signals & Remote Switches at West Goffs on the BNSF

We take a look at how the real railroad does it, so you can model it ...

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— by Joshua Baakko

photos by the author

On a vacation/railfan trip, I came across something I had not thought of taking pictures of before. Just outside of Goffs, CA, on the former U.S. Route 66 (now National Trails Highway), there's a long passing siding. CP West Goffs is at the western end of this siding. West Goffs has an array of signal equipment and a remote switch.

BNSF keeps this equipment in tip top condition. If it were to fail they would lose a siding on one of the busiest main lines in their system. The site contains two steel cabinets. One contains a propane-fired back up generator. To the east of the shacks is a modern cantilever signal bridge, similar to the prototype for the BLMA Models version. To the west there are two signals and the remote switch.

Figure 1. Eastbound train view, of the back of the cantilever signal bridge.

Modeling this set-up in HO scale would require a few things. The cantilever signal can be modeled with the BLMA Models Modern Cantilever Signal Bridge, part #4030 (www.blmamodels.com). The bridge would require 3 signal heads to replicate the prototype scene here.

The equipment boxes would have to be scratchbuilt as they're far too different from any commercial kits. Simple styrene construction should be fine, as they're smooth metal. Paint with Testor's Silver, or colors from Alcad II and they should look perfect. There are doors to the cabinet, so you may want to take a commercial kit and rebuilt it to suit. Suitable louvers are available from Archer Models. See model-railroad-hobbyist.com/node/2631. If that's too much for you, you can always kitbash a commercial kit from Details West, BLMA, and others.

The generator cabinet has an angled air intake vent facing to the south, an intake vent to the north. All doors have padlocks. The second cabinet is much more plain but also has a number of doors, and all are padlocked. There are no doors on the sides of the cabinets that face the tracks. Both cabinets have six lift rings on the sides, three on the rail side and three on the road side.

The propane tank can be picked up from a number of manufacturers, or scratchbuilt. I myself would pick up one from JL Innovative Design, part numbers 724 through 726 or 730 should work fine. The cabinets and propane tank are protected by concrete jersey barrier; BLMA makes a VERY nice jersey barrier, just paint it white to match (as of mid-2009 the barriers and tanks have been repainted silver). Place one at a 90 degree angle to the tracks to protect the propane tank, and two more parallel to the tracks and the road, on the road side of the site, opposite from the tracks.

The site also has a fairly tall (approximately 50') radio antenna. This antenna is mounted on a stand that can be lowered to do any maintenance, and is located to the north east of the cabinets. The jersey

Figure 2. West and south sides of the generator cabinet.

Figure 3. Propane tank and jersey barrier.

barrier just barely protects it. An exact match is not made, however a BLMA antenna can be substituted.

To the south between the cabinets is the West Goffs sign. This is formed in the same way as most Santa Fe signs. It stands on top of a 8-foot-tall, 4x4 post. The lettering is painted on over the metal band holding the sign in place.

The top of the sign post is tapered, and the sign is black lettering on a white background. The sign is approximately 5 inches tall, by 3 feet long.

If you look closely, you'll see that this installation is at MP 611.62. This is painted on both ends of the non-generator cabinet and on the west end of the generator cabinet. The cabinets also have a black sign with white lettering stating they're located at MP 611.6, these signs are on the outside ends, one to the east on the non-generator cabinet, and one to the west on the generator cabinet.

At the west end of the siding there are three signal masts. The switch is signaled by a single three-light signal located about 300' before the switch. When heading west you would be using the cantilever signal previously mentioned, or this signal if you're on the siding. Eastbound trains use the two masts in the distance. Both masts have two signal heads, with 3 lights each. All signal heads have shrouds. BLMA stocks the dual head version and the single head is forthcoming. Tomar and other manufacturers also make 3 light signals.

The remote switch motor detail is available in HO scale from Details West.

Figure 4. West Goffs sign.

Figure 5. Close-up view.

Figure 6. West signals, single signal at the end of the siding.

Figure 7. Eastbound signal mast.

The HO scale model is not operational, not that there is much moving on the prototype. The handle is there for manual override.

I hope I've inspired someone to model a signal and switch set-up like this. This is only one of many ways this can be set up, and is by no means the only way. ☑.

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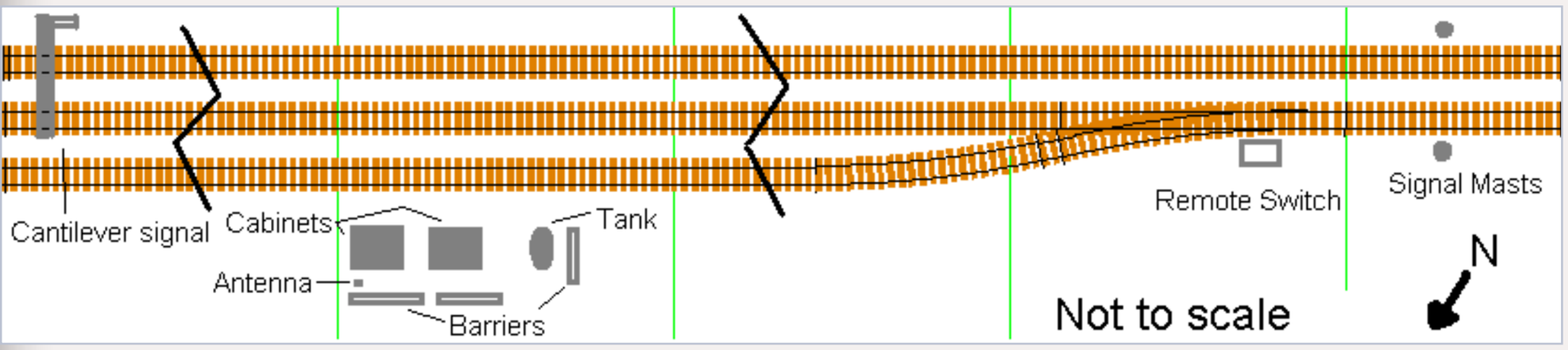
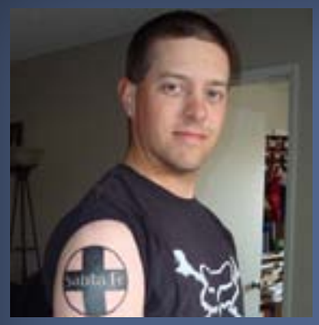


Figure 8. Layout of the site.

Figure 9. West Goffs remote switch.

Figure 10. Overview of the West Goffs site.



Josh Baakko models the BNSF & Union Pacific in the contemporary period, in HO scale. His layout plans are to stick to modern era equipment, with a 5 year "back date" max.

Josh grew up in Hancock MI, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, thus creating a lasting interest in all things Copper Country railroading related. He particularly likes the Copper Range & Mineral Range railroads, and collects anything relating to Copper Country railroading.

Josh lives in San Diego with his wife, Stacey. He usually can be found at the annual Western Prototype Modelers meet in San Bernardino CA.