

A Loop is not a Loop by the layout doctor

Reverse loops can be made integral parts of terminals providing better operating possibilities and disguising the prime function of the loop.

REALLY, a reverse loop need not be just a reverse loop, as the above title suggests. To most model railroaders the word *loop* usually means a simple oval, permitting trains to continue running indefinitely over a relatively small section of track in which the two ends have joined. The idea is not new, but it is clever and has entertained kiddies since before the turn of the century. Of itself, it does not stimulate the minds of us model railroaders, though some other hobbies thrive on the loop idea. The loop in model railroad-

ing becomes a bore except to those modelers whose prime interest is the equipment.

The use of a loop as a means of reversing at the end of a section of track, shaped in the manner of a balloon, would be termed a reverse loop. Very common at one time trolley and interurban lines, they permitted cars to turn without the need for changing poles and switching. Such reverse loops are rare in real railroading although I remember the old Cold Spring Harbor loop on the Pennsylvania - Reading Seashore Lines. There is also one built into the bowels of New York's Grand Central Terminal.

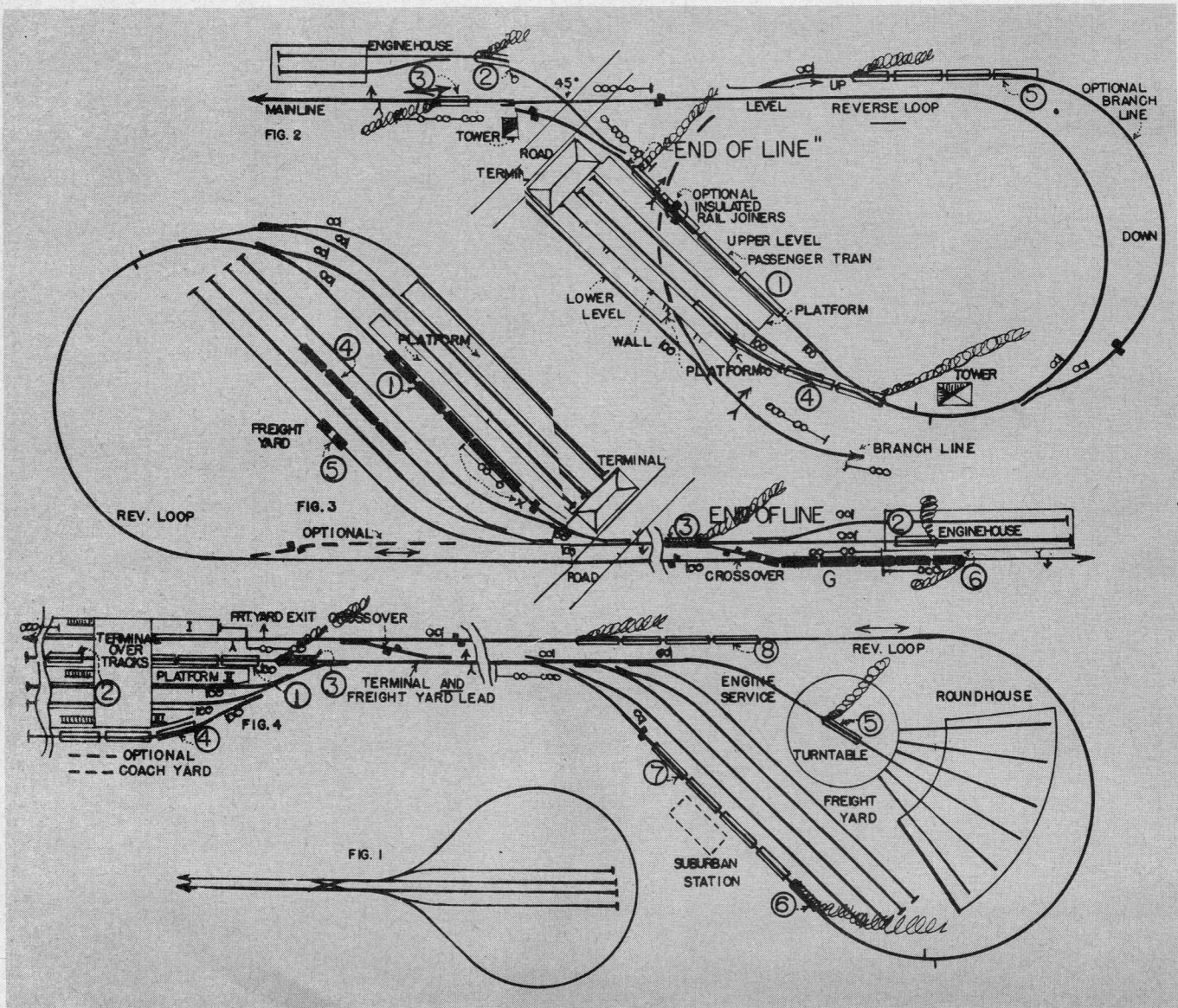
Reverse loops abound on model railroads, since model rails are interested in returning trains to their starting points. The operator cannot be in two locations at one time, but by having a loop at the other end of the line, he can send trains out and have them come back home, permit-

ting the operator to concentrate on the one big terminal which is about as most modelers have room for.

I've been drawing layouts for years with reverse loops and my usual treatment of them is to make them double track, providing a sort of passing and storage track, where trains could be held as operating contingencies demanded. Alternately, a terminal might be located inside a reverse loop, as shown in Fig. 1. The loop might run beyond the end of the terminal stub tracks, or above or below them. The open space could also be filled in with a town, coach or freight yards, or other trackage or sidings.

Suppose, however, that we make the reverse loop as an optional dead end terminal for trains, yet have it available for use as a reverse loop whenever we want or need it, in one man operation or for those occasions when terminal work isn't desired.

Fig. 2 shows the scheme in fairly





Upper level reverse loop on Lloyd Church's Tomahawk Trail Railroad would lend itself to any of the suggested Layout Doctor terminal

treatments shown on the opposite page. Modelers often hide reverse loops under a tunnel. Church's loop is inconspicuous, well done.

simplified form. Trains approaching the reverse loop from the left keep going straight and enter the stub end terminal, as if to continue on out again. Let the train stop at (1), leaving the cars at the platform. The engine can then go directly to the enginehouse as (2), or head out on the main line (3) and then back around the reverse loop to the rear of its former train. It can then head out the way it came, or pull the cars up clear of the terminal ladder track and back the cars and itself into one of the terminal tracks. Alternately, this work could be done by a switch engine.

I show a branch line ducking downhill and under the terminal to continue on around the layout if you wish. This has a spur running into a low level platform of the terminal for an RDC or other short passenger train. You can also use the branch line to form a big oval around the train room, tying in its indefinite end to the main line at left. Through trains from the branch would then proceed through the terminal track and directly out on the main line to the left.

You may not want to put in signals right away, but I show one suggested way of doing same. Where there is only one lamp it is red and always lit (at "end of line" because it is the end, and other places because of an interlocking where a "stop and stay stopped" aspect is needed). Two lamps would be orange over red, while three lamps would be green over orange over red. The highest aspect, where there are two heads of two or more lights is for the main route, while the lower aspect would be for the secondary route. Dwarf signals are all two colors, orange and red. Even if you don't wire up signals,

you might like to put them in place and illuminate them with colored reflectors or jewels.

Now in fig. 3, I've introduced some variations and complications. The engine house has been kept on the same side of the main line as the reverse loop and terminal, which will enable you to shove the whole main line closer to the wall and save width. The passage, for complete reverse looping of trains without stopping, is via a left-hand crossover to the main line.

I've omitted the branch line, as on fig. 2, though it could be worked in. But I've used part of the inside of the reverse loop to put in a small freight yard. Entering freight trains round the reverse loop, pass through the terminal track, and pull up toward the enginehouse and back in to the freight yard. A more interesting operation is shown by the numbers. Let the road engine drop its train at (1), and pull up to the enginehouse (2). Let a switcher (3) come from the enginehouse or yard and couple to the train sitting at (1). It can then put the train (4) into one of the yard tracks after shoving the caboose (5) to a separate track. Of course cars in the yard can later be shunted around. The same switcher can later make up a train on any of the yard tracks or on the terminal track, the road engine (2) comes from the roundhouse, and leaves town via the crossover per (6).

In fig. 4 the idea is carried a little further. Instead of the enginehouse being at the end of the line, I have located the passenger terminal there, parallel to the entering main line (which may also have a stop there). The freight yard is still in the center of the reverse loop, and so is the enginehouse. I show a roundhouse here, with turntable. The turntable

seems redundant since there is already the reverse loop to turn engines. However, I wanted to be able to comment that when you plan to store a lot of engines—and most model rails end up with an awful lot—a turntable is economical in that it saves switches. You could alternately have a parallel track engine house, as the other sketches.

A passenger train entering the terminal after rounding the reverse loop would stop at (1). Its engine would be uncoupled and pull up to position (2) and held there by a short section of track insulated from the rest and energized only by a pushbutton. A switcher would then come from elsewhere (3), couple to the rear end of the cars, pull them out and shove them into another of the terminal tracks (4). This enables the road engine (2) to escape and proceed to the turntable and roundhouse (5) for servicing.

Another method would be for the road engine to drop its train at some suburban station (Englewood, 125th St., Jenkintown, Winton Place, etc.), head for the enginehouse, and let a switcher (6) shove the train (7) into the terminal track. A passenger train departing from the terminal would run straight out and around the reverse loop, (8). Freight operation would be as in fig. 3.

Insulated rail joiner locations suggested are solid black blocks on each side of the track. Most feeders to the electrical sections thus created are arrow heads and tails. However the feeders to reversing sections have neither heads nor tails.

No doubt as time proceeds, you'll see this idea incorporated into more and more of my layout plans. Try it on your plan and on your actual layout. Let's hear what you think of it.