

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, BUT DIFFERENTLY

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A while ago I learned that I needed another scratch-built structure to complete the requirements for earning an Achievement Program certificate for my structures. A friend suggested that I throw together some non-kit DPM panels; add a roof, door, window and some details; letter it for the town water department and get it over with. This would be adequate for the AP purposes, and I could turn my attention to achieving certification in other aspects of the Achievement Program. And, since I'm in my eighth decade, it would probably be wise, or at least prudent, to do so. But I found this suggested structure not very interesting.

An obvious place for such a structure in my town of Petersham (Peterboro, Peterstown?) was next to the railroad's water tank and across the alley behind the Merchants' Block fronting Main Street. But this would be one of the first structures seen as a visitor or I approached the layout – it would definitely be a “foreground” structure. Thus, I wanted an interesting and convincing, not necessarily exquisitely detailed, building in that location. That space is not very large, necessitating essentially a small square or rectangular building. At that point I had only six DPM panels: a street level freight door, a street level arched entry, four street level blank walls and the accompanying door and window. No matter how I played with these components, I saw a dull, unconvincing building which would crowd (narrow) the alley, making that look unrealistic. How could any truck get to the back doors of the stores in the Merchants' Block? Locating the freight and people doors was the major problem, plus having four of the walls blank.





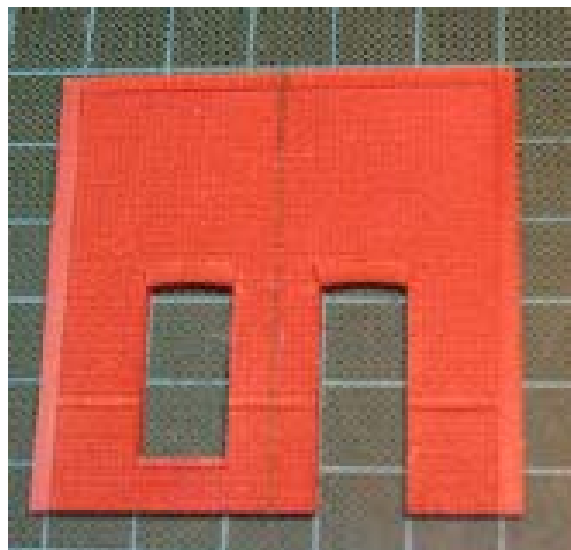
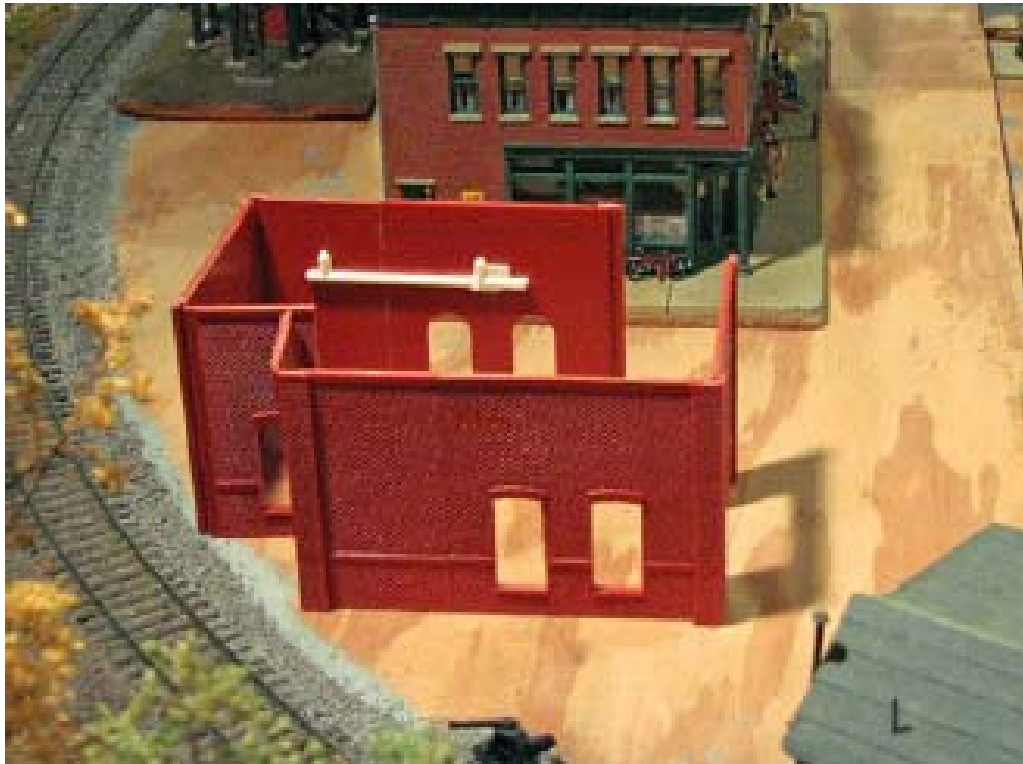
At the end of the Merchants' Block across the street was another empty space where a slightly larger and differently shaped building could go. Given the track configuration at the back of the lot and the proposed shape and location of the street in the front, a building two-panels wide and two panels deep was not possible. After fiddling with possible shapes of buildings to go here, I realized that the Model Railroader Code of Ethics ("do whatever you want and get away with it") contained nothing preventing cutting DPM panels in half for use in smaller buildings than could be made using the standard panels. Doing this would allow me to create a larger, differently shaped and somewhat more interesting building that would go on the site and serve as the town's utilities' offices.

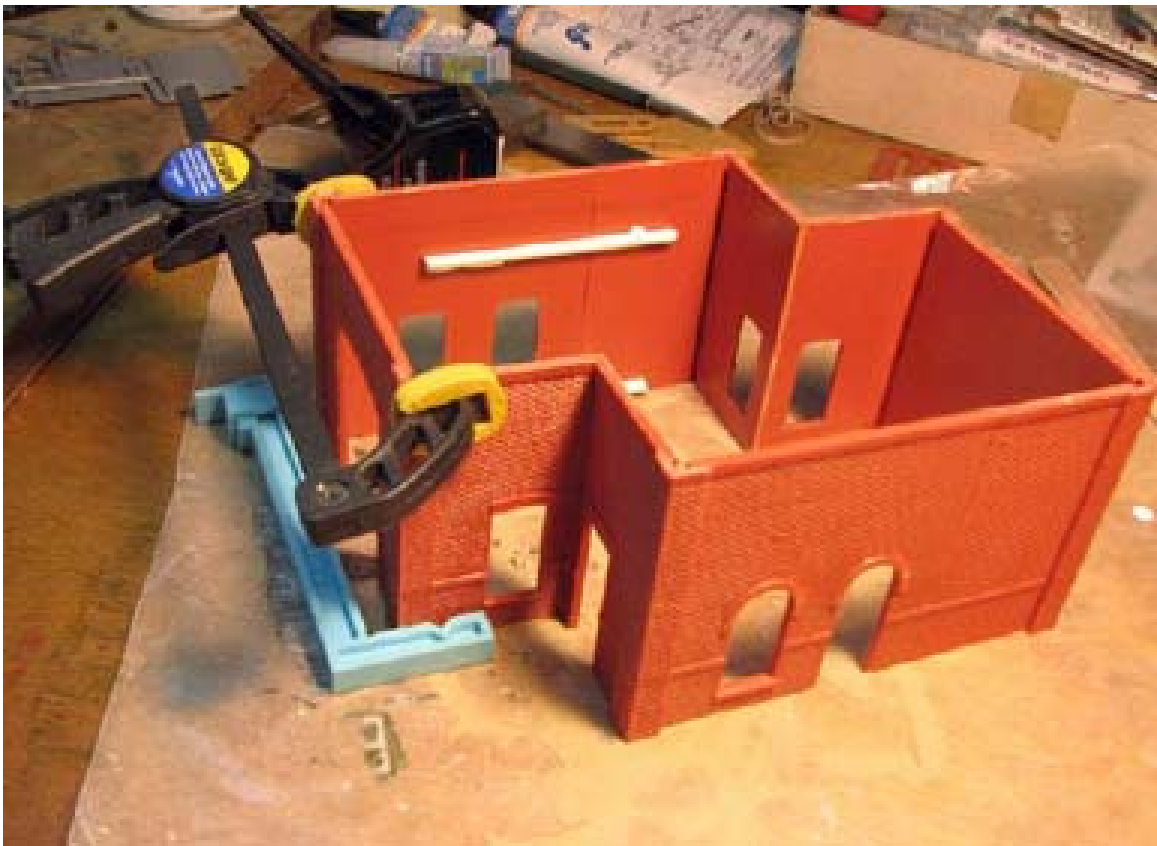


Not wanting a building with so many blank walls, I purchased a pack of street level rectangular windows and a pack of street level rectangular entries (to indicate alterations made to the building after it was originally constructed) and a DPM roof and trim kit.

In the fairly routine construction process, after measuring for the center line carefully and marking it with a sharp pencil, I scored the fronts of a rectangular entry panel and a rectangular window panel and snapped them apart. After removing the recessed end of a "regular" wall section I edge-glued the "snapped" edge of a short section to the regular

section. The bricks of the beltline and top course of two “snapped” walls were removed so that when they were used in an “inside” corner they would butt tightly. Where useful, I braced these with fragments of sprues collected over the years. After adding the pilasters, I glued the reversed, slightly z-shaped building together in the usual fashion. Why DPM does not produce a narrower pilaster which would allow the wall sections to touch and make a stronger joint when glued into “outside” corners (and a somewhat smaller building), I do not know.







Moving on, the shape and size of the roof were traced onto the roofing material supplied with the Roof and Trim Kit. This material seems too flimsy to keep from sagging in the middle, but I decided to try it anyway. Since I usually overbuild things, so this will be a learning process for me. Next, wall trim was cut to fit the inside of the wall above the roof and glued in place. Then the holes left in the parapets were filled with Squadron white putty, which was also used to “cap” the joints between the wall and roof trim castings. Another approach to the “capping” would have been to put an excessive amount of plastic cement at the top of the trim pieces and, after letting this sit for a few seconds, carefully press them tightly to the wall castings, thus causing just enough of the dissolved plastic to schmush out and fill the narrow joint. When dry, this was all sanded lightly to smooth it.

Since I wanted to try a different color of brick on this building, I lightly sprayed several light coats of Color-Place “almond” paint onto the walls and roof trim. When this was dry I placed the building in its intended spot on the layout to check the color under the lights. It looked like red brick painted barely white; not good, too light. Then I sprayed a light coat of Floquil’s “Instant Weathering”, which got closer, but was a bit gray. This was not really what I wanted, which was a bit more yellow. But not wanting to use too much of my remaining life on this building I rationalized that the color was a true earth tone and stayed with it.

A word for the wise: if you are using ColorPlace rattle-can paint, as recommended by Bar Mills – at least they recommend using the grey primer to seal bass wood before painting and these paints do have very finely ground pigments – be aware that if the cap is shiny, the paint dries glossy. Flat-drying paint comes in cans with a dull = non-shiny cap. There is no other indication of flat or glossy on the can.



The windows and doors I sprayed with the almond paint, which looked good with the brick. When dry, I added "glass" and window shades where appropriate and glued these in place. Door knobs were indicated where appropriate. A hole was drilled on the blank back wall for a smoke pipe from the leftover parts box, sufficient for a coal fired furnace converted to using natural gas. A round of black paper was punched out for use as a flange for where the smoke pipe entered the building, after a hole was drilled in its center.

Note to self: throw out old dull bits – they don't work well; don't be so cheap. I squirted a dose of GOO into the hole and stuck the pipe through the flange and into the hole. After that set up, I added a coat of ACC from the inside. (Did I mention that I usually over-build my models?)



The roof, once it had been tweaked to fit well, was spray painted flat black and glued up against the wall trim pieces from below using liberal amounts of plastic cement. This seems to have worked well and apparently created a watertight seal. As is well known, with model railroad structures downspouts have nothing to do with rain but are primarily for hiding seams and joints. In keeping with the latest detail becoming mandatory on flat-roof model structures, scupper drains were cut from Blair-Line storm drains and pressed onto the insides of the wall strips. The scuppers and downspouts will be added later. Thinking that the roof would be quite plain and easily seen and thinking that this building would have had some small vents on the roof for some reason and having tons of the worthless coupler and truck “plugs” that Accurail seems to think will hold these parts onto models but which invariably fall out in tunnels, I drilled four holes in the roof at somewhat random places, squirted GOO into them and stuck the plugs in.



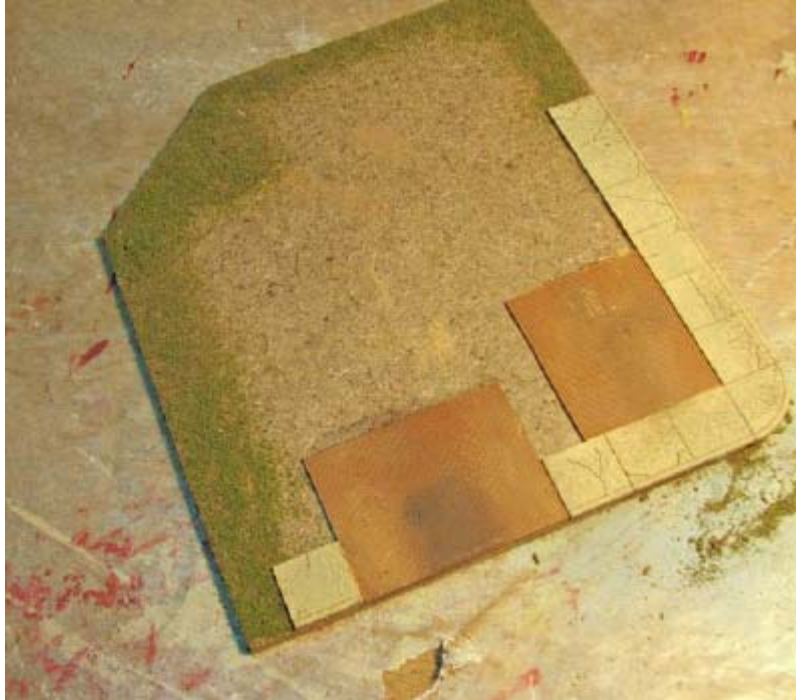
I used GOO for this hoping that it would fill any gaps for what came next. I created a shallow pond of my scenery glue on the roof, “wetted” it with a light spray of wet water and, using a spoon, sifted fine “cinder” ballast into the pond. I let the liquids and ballast spread themselves into a fairly even and thin layer to dry while I ate breakfast. After filling in a couple of thin spots, I added another “pond” of scenery cement and let that dry overnight. So far I have one of the very few flat roofs (what a dumb idea!) in western civilization that does not leak. Accumulated dirt was painted onto the roof leading to the scupper drains and weathering powders worked into the roof. The “vents” rusted, some of which over the years ran down onto the roof. The scuppers and downspouts were fabricated, painted and glued into position. A third one was added to

the plain back wall, just because. Even though the back walls of town buildings are not usually visual masterpieces, I thought this one was especially plain. Electrical service was brought into the building. When the handling of the structure was winding down, I added a dark paper view block. Weathering powders were worked onto the walls and doors.

Lesson learned and another word to the wise: indicating door knobs using a ball point pen and then spraying a water-based India ink wash over a model, as I did, results in very diffuse and funny looking door knobs – rather like smudges. Maybe I just have cheap ball point pens.

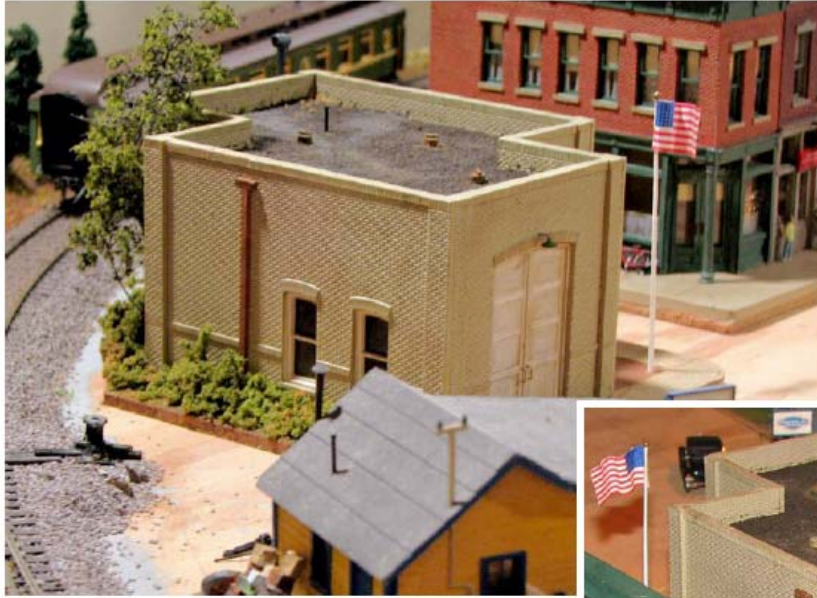
A sign was made using dry transfer lettering and glued in place. I had three packs of partly used Woodland Scenic dry transfer lettering (DT 506) which contain some 1/16th inch high lettering. Since that translates into essentially six-inch tall lettering in the real world, that would be a good size for a sign over an entrance door and still fit between the pilaster and the adjoining wall. Toward the end of the lettering process, which started out on black construction paper but was switched to medium brown when I found I could not see the penciled guide lines, I learned one of Woodland Scenic's marketing secrets. Namely, include only two "L"s in the smallest lettering included on each sheet. With "L"s being one of the more frequently used letters, modelers have to buy extra packs. I have plenty of "q"s, "x"s and a "z" if anyone needs some more, but all of the "L"s and "T"s in each pack were used up. The deity was earnestly invoked. Exterior lights were made and installed. Door handles were bent from wire on hand and inserted into the large doors.





A piece of masonite was cut to both hold the structure and fit with the trackwork. A brick entry and a garage ramp were cut from some plastic brick siding in my part box weathered and glued in place. Painted Bar-Mills sidewalks were used to help make the building look reasonable when placed in the town on the layout. Rudimentary ground cover applied to wet brown latex paint. When this was dry, the finished model was glued in place and more landscaping applied.

The flag pole was installed and then the tree was planted last, after a small rise was installed to provide a more secure anchorage for the tree. Some additional "customer-friendly" details, a bench for example, will probably be added later, as will a gas meter and valve when they arrive at the LHS. While this simple requirement for the AP turned into a somewhat larger and time-consuming project, it does add to the slowly developing town on my layout.



Peter's layout will be among the layout tours during the 2010 Mid-Continent Regional Convention, hosted by the Eastern Iowa Division. Don't miss it!

