

How I Got My Golden Spike Award

Presented by Jeff Jarr

Golden Spike Award



If you are new to the Achievement Program (AP), we recommend that you take a look at the Golden Spike Award.

Although the Golden Spike Award is not an actual AP category, its requirements are structured along the same lines.

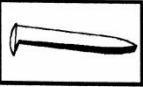
Golden Spike Award



- The Golden Spike is the easiest, and for many people, the first AP award that they earn.
- It is designed to demonstrate familiarity with different areas of the hobby, rather than expertise in a particular area.
- Take a look at the requirements - you may find that you have met most, or all of them already.

Golden Spike Award

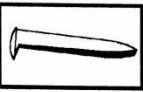


	ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD APPLICATION FORM May 2006
PLEASE COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION FORM AND SEND TO YOUR REGIONAL OR DIVISIONAL AP CHAIR	
Member's Name: _____ NMRA#: _____ EXP: _____	
Address: _____ City: _____	
State/Prov: _____ Country: _____ Postal Code: _____	
Date Submitted: _____ Region: _____	
<p>The Golden Spike Award will be awarded to any NMRA member who has completed the Qualifications Checklist, obtained the necessary signatures and who does not hold MMR status. It will be administered by the regional and divisional AP Chairs. AP regulations and definitions apply for scratchbuilding and detailing. To qualify for the award the member must complete the following checklist; obtain the signature of the divisional AP Chair or another NMRA member designated by the divisional Chair. The divisional Chair will submit the signed form to the regional AP Chair who will issue the Golden Spike Award certificate.</p>	
QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:	
1. Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Display six units of rolling stock either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or detailed commercial kits.	
2. Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Construct a minimum of eight square feet of layout including scenery.	
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3. Engineering (Civil & Electrical)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Three types of trackage required (e.g. turnout, crossing, crossover, etc.). All must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed. Commercial trackage may be used.	
<input type="checkbox"/> All installed trackage must be properly wired so that two trains can be operated simultaneously (e.g. double track main, single track main with sidings, and block or command control).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide one additional electrical feature such as power operated turnouts, signaling, turnout indication, lighted buildings, etc.	
Witness: _____ Name: _____ NMRA #: _____	
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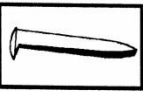
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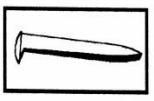
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- This section lists the rules for eligibility

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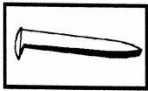
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- This part of the form is the Qualifications Checklist

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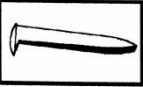
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- This section is for Divisional & Regional AP Chairs to sign

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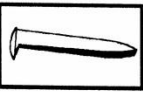


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- Lets take a quick look at each section in detail.

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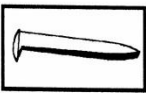
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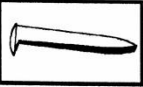
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- Lets review the rules for eligibility

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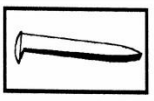
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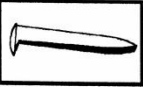
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- OK, that seems pretty simple so far.
- Now lets examine the Qualifications Checklist.

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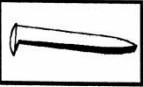
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- The Qualifications Checklist is divided into 3 main categories.

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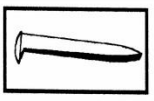
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- Rolling Stock
- Model Railroad Setting
- Engineering

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- Each category has a list of requirements.

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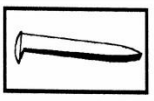
- ☐ Construct a minimum of eight square feet of layout including scenery.
- ☐ Construct five structures either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or detailed commercial kits. If a module has less than five structures, additional structures separate from the scene may be presented.

3. Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

- ☐ Three types of trackage required (e.g. turnout, crossing, crossover, etc.). All must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed. Commercial trackage may be used.
- ☐ All installed trackage must be properly wired so that two trains can be operated simultaneously (e.g. double track main, single track main with sidings, and block or command control).
- ☐ Provide one additional electrical feature such as power operated turnouts, signaling, turnout indication, lighted buildings, etc.

Golden Spike Award



**ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM
GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD
APPLICATION FORM
May 2006**

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION FORM AND SEND TO YOUR REGIONAL OR DIVISIONAL AP CHAIR

Member's Name: _____ NMRA#: _____ EXP: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State/Prov: _____ Country: _____ Postal Code: _____

Date Submitted: _____ Region: _____

The Golden Spike Award will be awarded to any NMRA member who has completed the Qualifications Checklist, obtained the necessary signatures and who does not hold MMR status. It will be administered by the regional and divisional AP Chairs. AP regulations and definitions apply for scratchbuilding and detailing. To qualify for the award the member must complete the following checklist; obtain the signature of the divisional AP Chair or another NMRA member designated by the divisional Chair. The divisional Chair will submit the signed form to the regional AP Chair who will issue the Golden Spike Award certificate.

QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

- Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars):**
 - ☐ Display six units of rolling stock either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or detailed commercial kits.
- Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)**
 - ☐ Construct a minimum of eight square feet of layout including scenery.
 - ☐ Construct five structures either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or detailed commercial kits. If a module has less than five structures, additional structures separate from the scene may be presented.
- Engineering (Civil & Electrical)**
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Witness: _____ Name: _____ NMRA #: _____

Regional AP Chair: _____ Region: _____

- The Qualifications Checklist is divided into 3 main categories.
- Each category has a list of requirements.
- Lets look at each one in more detail

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QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

1. Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars):

- Display six units of rolling stock either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or detailed commercial kits.

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QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

1. Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars):

- Display six units of rolling stock either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or detailed commercial kits.

Notice that the requirement is to "display" them. Nowhere does it say that they must earn a minimum number of points in judging - just that they must be displayed. (In the monthly contests at your division meetings, for example. Even having them set out on your layout, or a table in your basement counts as "display").

Golden Spike Award



QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

1. Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars):

- Display six units of rolling stock either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or detailed commercial kits.

These models need to show a little more effort than a "shake the box" kit. For example, by itself a freight car kit straight out of the box, is not enough to qualify. However, by painting and decaling it, adding a little detailing, perhaps some weathering, etc., you'll have a qualifying model in no time!

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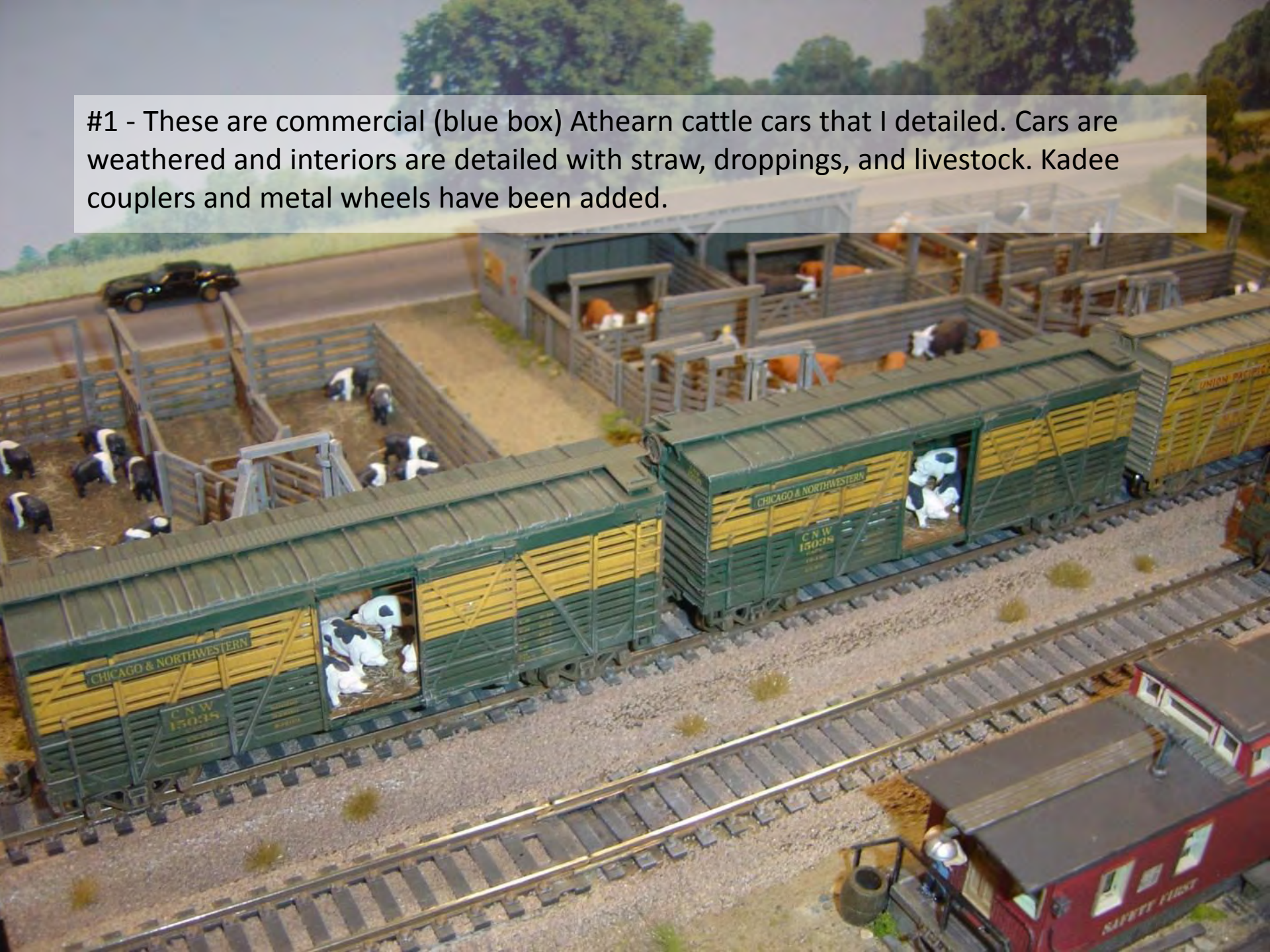
QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

1. Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars):

- Display six units of rolling stock either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or detailed commercial kits.

Here are some photos of the rolling stock that I used to meet this requirement

#1 - These are commercial (blue box) Athearn cattle cars that I detailed. Cars are weathered and interiors are detailed with straw, droppings, and livestock. Kadee couplers and metal wheels have been added.



#2 - This is a commercial (blue box) Athearn 50ft double door box car that has been weathered and interior detailed with inside painted walls, graffiti, and miscellaneous debris and cargo. Kadee scale coupler and metal wheels have been added.



#3 - This is a commercial RTR Athearn Alco RS-3. I added Kadee scale couplers and weathered the unit using airbrush, chalks, and acrylic paints.



#4 - This is a commercial (blue box) Athearn 250 ton crane and tender. I bought this kit undecorated. I custom painted and decaled it for C&NW. I weathered it and added Kadee couplers, metal wheels.



#4 - Misc. details have also been added to the deck of the crane tender.



- #5 - This is a commercial (blue box) Athearn bay window caboose. I added Kadee couplers and weathered it using airbrush, chalks, colored pencils and acrylic paints.



#6 - These are old commercial (blue box) Athearn F7A and F7B units. I repowered them with new motors, added all the windows, added diaphragms between the engines, added numbers in the number boards, and installed Kadee scale couplers.



#6 - There are a total of 4 A units and 3 B units all together.



#6 – I weathered these using airbrush, chalks, colored pencils and acrylic paints.



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QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

2. Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)

- Construct a minimum of eight square feet of layout including scenery.
- Construct five structures either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or detailed commercial kits. If a module has less than five structures, additional structures separate from the scene may be presented.

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QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

2. Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)

- Construct a minimum of eight square feet of layout including scenery.

Again, there is no requirement about how good or how elaborate your layout must be - just that you must "construct" it. On the other hand, you may have trouble convincing someone that a loop of track nailed to a piece of green painted wood constitutes a "layout" . . . How much is 8 square feet of layout? Well, a typical module is 4 feet by 2 feet, and would easily satisfy this requirement.

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QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

2. Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)

- Construct a minimum of eight square feet of layout including scenery.

Here are some photos of my modular layout that I used to meet this requirement.

Each module is 10 sq. ft. (48" x 30") and completely finished with scenery.



Each module alone satisfies the size requirement.



I currently have 8 modules completely finished with scenery for a total of 80 sq. ft.



You only need 8 sq. ft. (2' x 4') to meet this requirement.



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QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

2. Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)

- Construct five structures either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or detailed commercial kits. If a module has less than five structures, additional structures separate from the scene may be presented.

The same comments apply here about the type of kits. The idea is to show that you can do more than glue a simple plastic kit together. Painting or weathering are good things to consider. Remember that "structures" aren't just buildings. Things like bridges and trestles also fall into this category.

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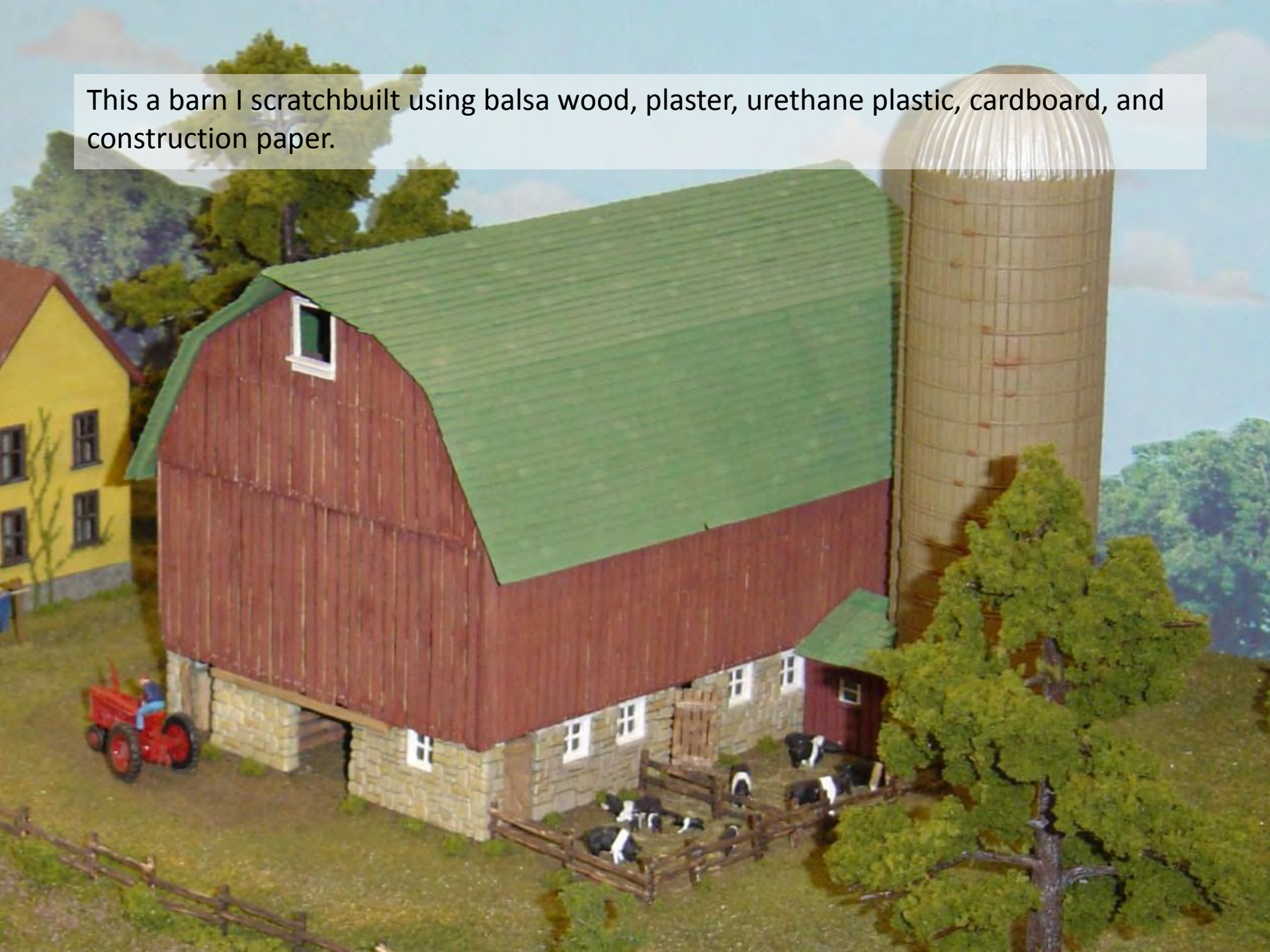
QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

2. Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)

- Construct five structures either scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or detailed commercial kits. If a module has less than five structures, additional structures separate from the scene may be presented.

Here are some photos of some structures I built that I used to meet this requirement.

This a barn I scratchbuilt using balsa wood, plaster, urethane plastic, cardboard, and construction paper.

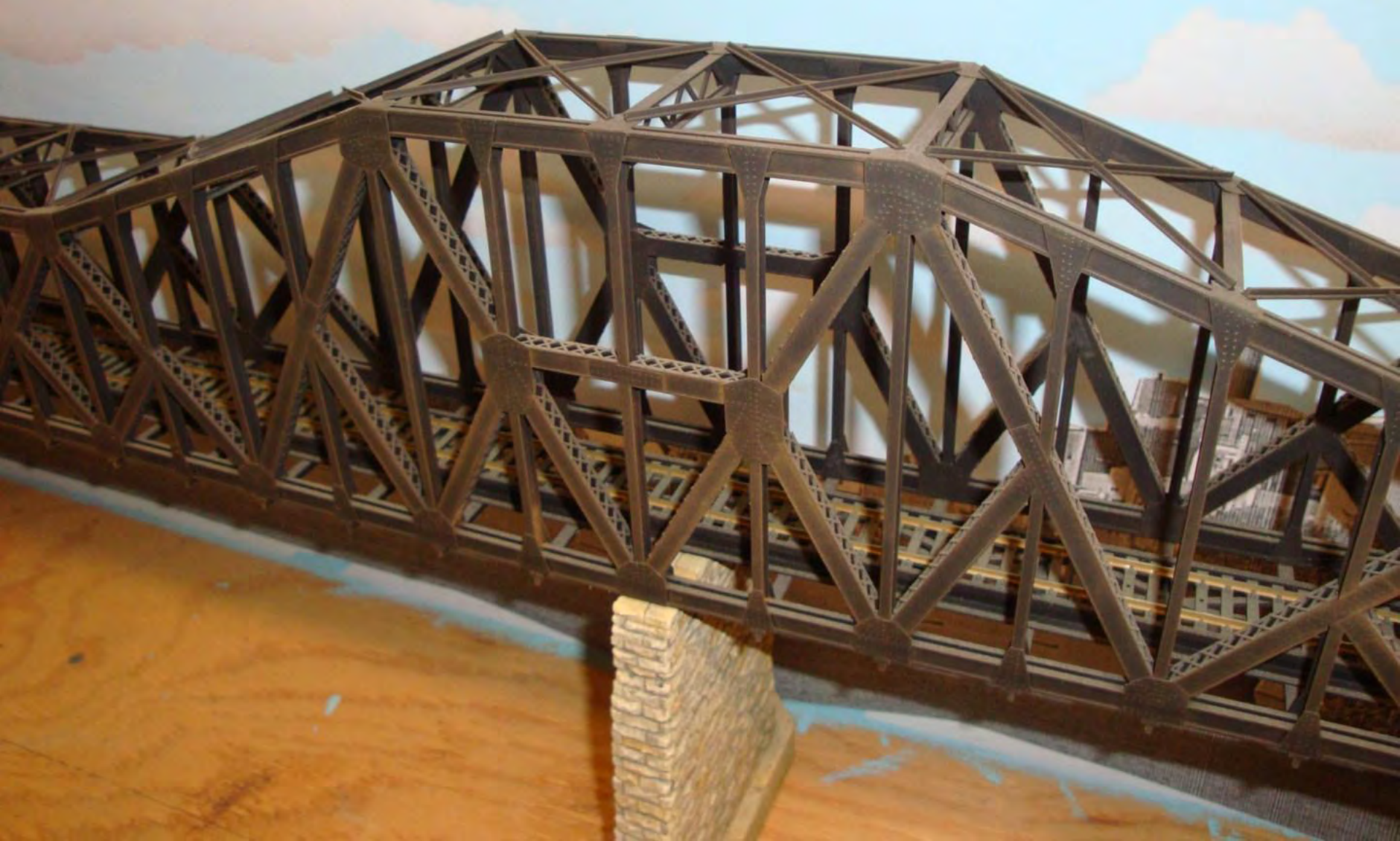


This is a six foot truss bridge I scratchbuilt using styrene, Micro Engineering girder parts and Plastruct structural shapes.



I then painted and weathered it using AIm's weathering chalk's.

Remember that things like bridges and trestles fall into the category of “structures”.



This is a large manufacturing plant I built from scratch using DPM modular wall sections.



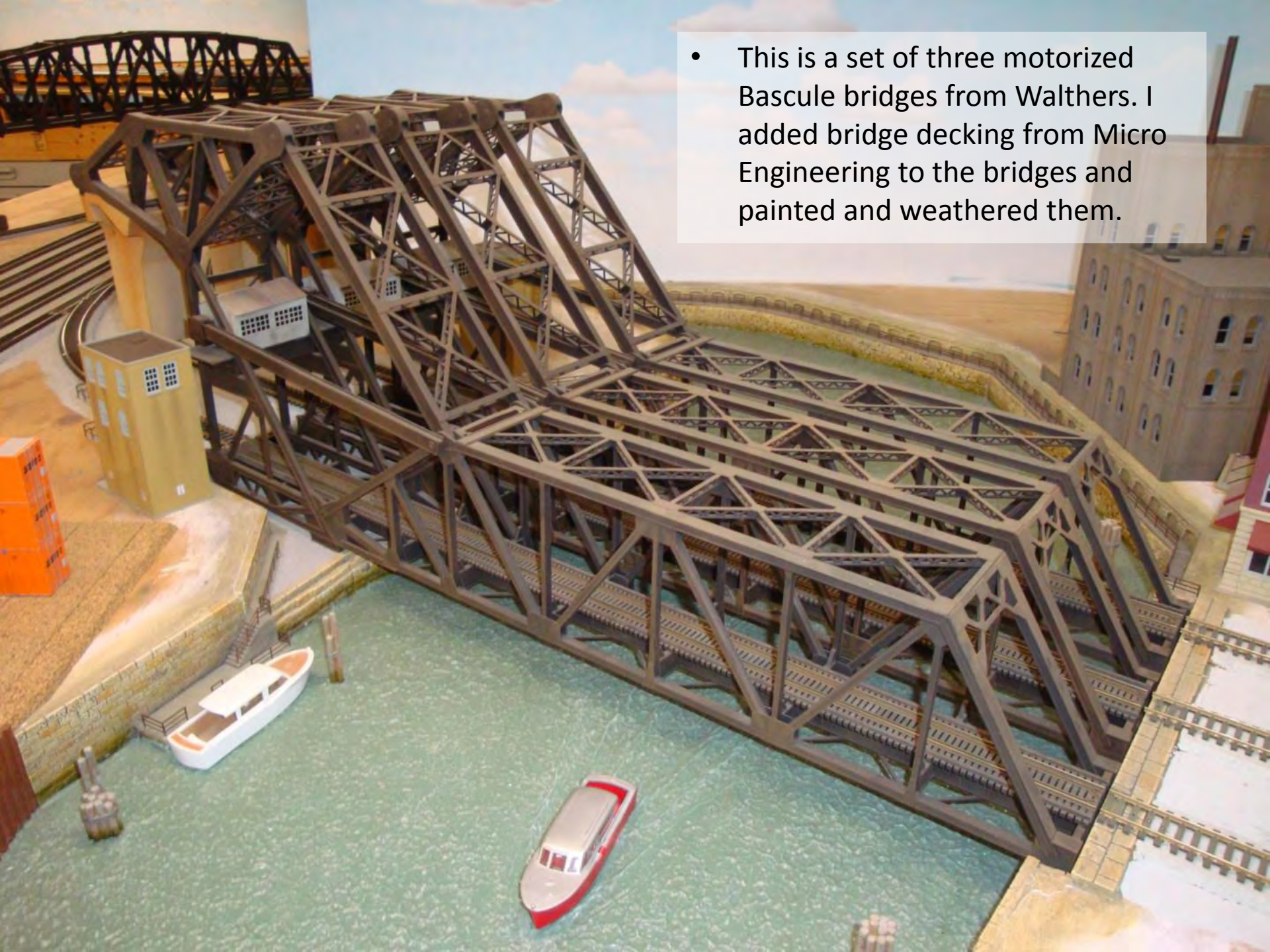
I then painted and weathered it using an airbrush and Floquil paints. An acrylic wash was used to represent the mortar joints.



I also added interior lighting to parts of the building near the loading docks.



- This is a set of three motorized Bascule bridges from Walthers. I added bridge decking from Micro Engineering to the bridges and painted and weathered them.



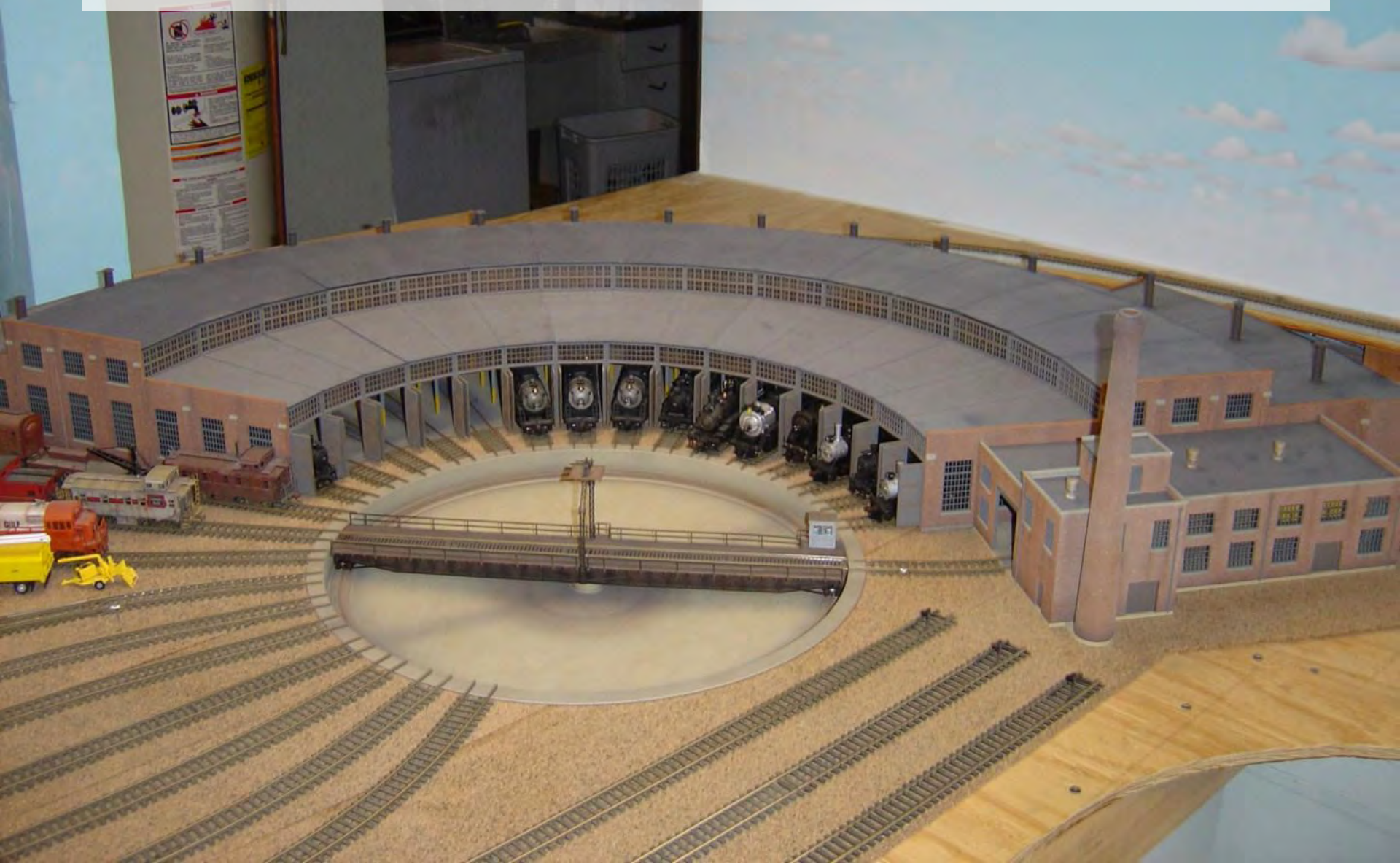
This is a coal mine I scratchbuilt using balsa wood. The roof is made of paper shingles from Campbell's rolled shingles.



This is a kit bashed lumber yard I made from 3 standard Atlas lumber yard kits. I custom painted and weathered it and added many small details.



Please keep in mind, your structures do not have to be some elaborate or enormous kit bashed facility or structure to qualify for this requirement.



Even a simple kit bashed yard office will meet the requirement for the structures category.



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QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

3. Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

- Three types of trackage required (e.g. turnout, crossing, crossover, etc.). All must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed. Commercial trackage may be used.
- All installed trackage must be properly wired so that two trains can be operated simultaneously (e.g. double track main, single track main with sidings, and block or command control).
- Provide one additional electrical feature such as power operated turnouts, signaling, turnout indication, lighted buildings, etc.

Golden Spike Award



QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

3. Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

- Three types of trackage required (e.g. turnout, crossing, crossover, etc.). All must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed. Commercial trackage may be used.

This requirement sounds a lot harder than it is. First, notice that last sentence about commercial trackage; you don't have to hand-lay anything - you can just install a store bought turnout. "Types of trackage" can be just about anything: turnouts, crossings, and grade elevation (a change in elevation of the track) are all examples of "types of trackage".

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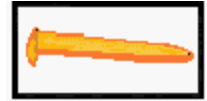
QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

3. Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

- Three types of trackage required (e.g. turnout, crossing, crossover, etc.). All must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed. Commercial trackage may be used.

Also, note that the three types DO NOT have to be different. For example, just having three simple turnouts will qualify. The "proper roadbed" requirement can be met by laying the track on a raised roadbed, (such as cork) and ballasting it. The purpose of this requirement is to show that you understand roadbed profile, drainage, etc.

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QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

3. Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

- Three types of trackage required (e.g. turnout, crossing, crossover, etc.). All must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed. Commercial trackage may be used.

Here are some photos of trackage that I installed and ballasted on my layout to meet this requirement.

This picture shows a group of turnouts on my modules, properly installed on cork roadbed and ballasted.



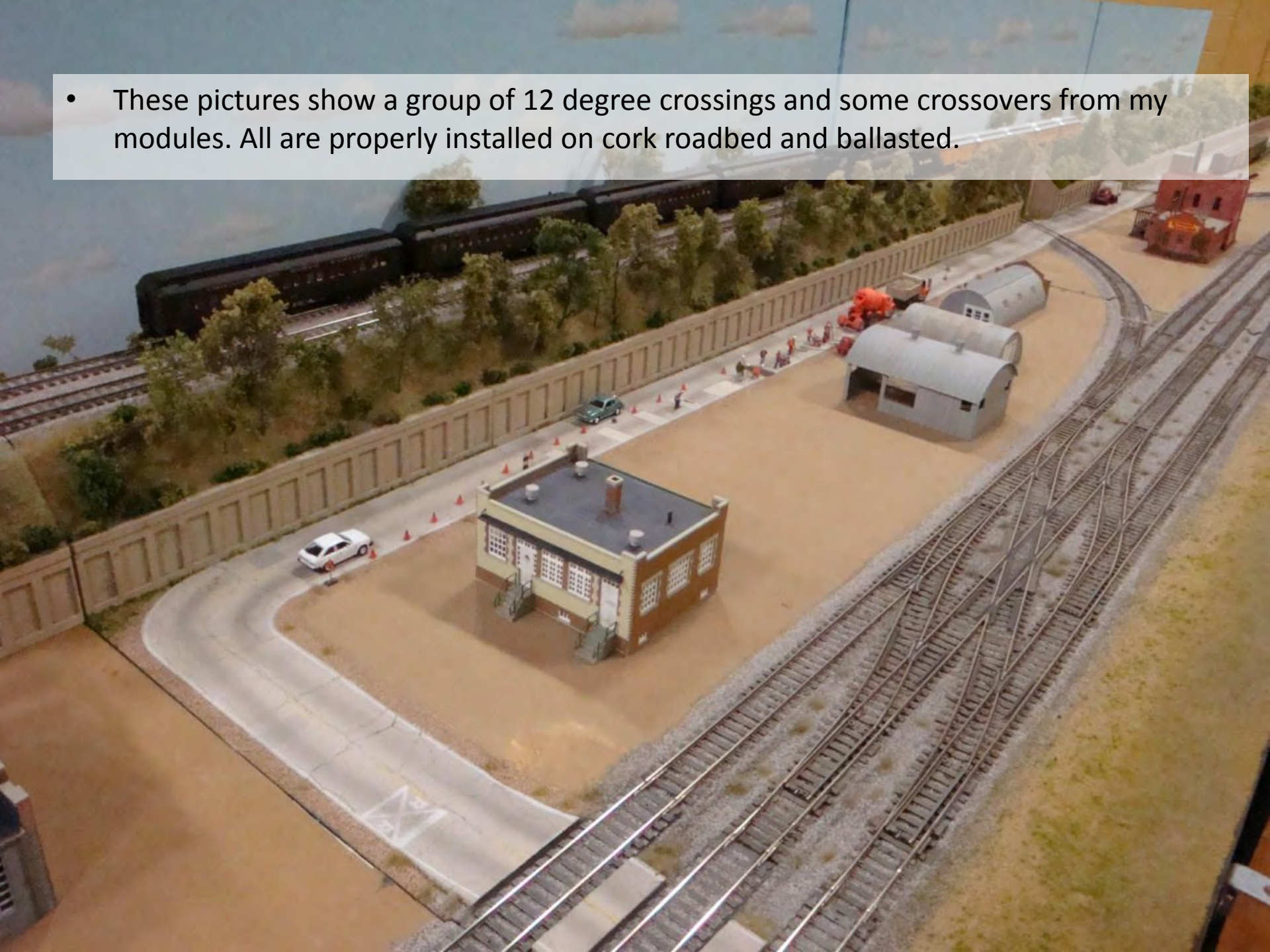
- These pictures show a group of 12 degree crossings and some crossovers from my modules. All are properly installed on cork roadbed and ballasted.



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QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

3. Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

- All installed trackage must be properly wired so that two trains can be operated simultaneously (e.g. double track main, single track main with sidings, and block or command control).

This requirement can also be easier than it sounds. Notice the option for a single track main with sidings. This means that as long as you can cut power to the sidings individually, you can run one train, park it on a siding while you run another, then park it and run the first again. This meets the requirement.

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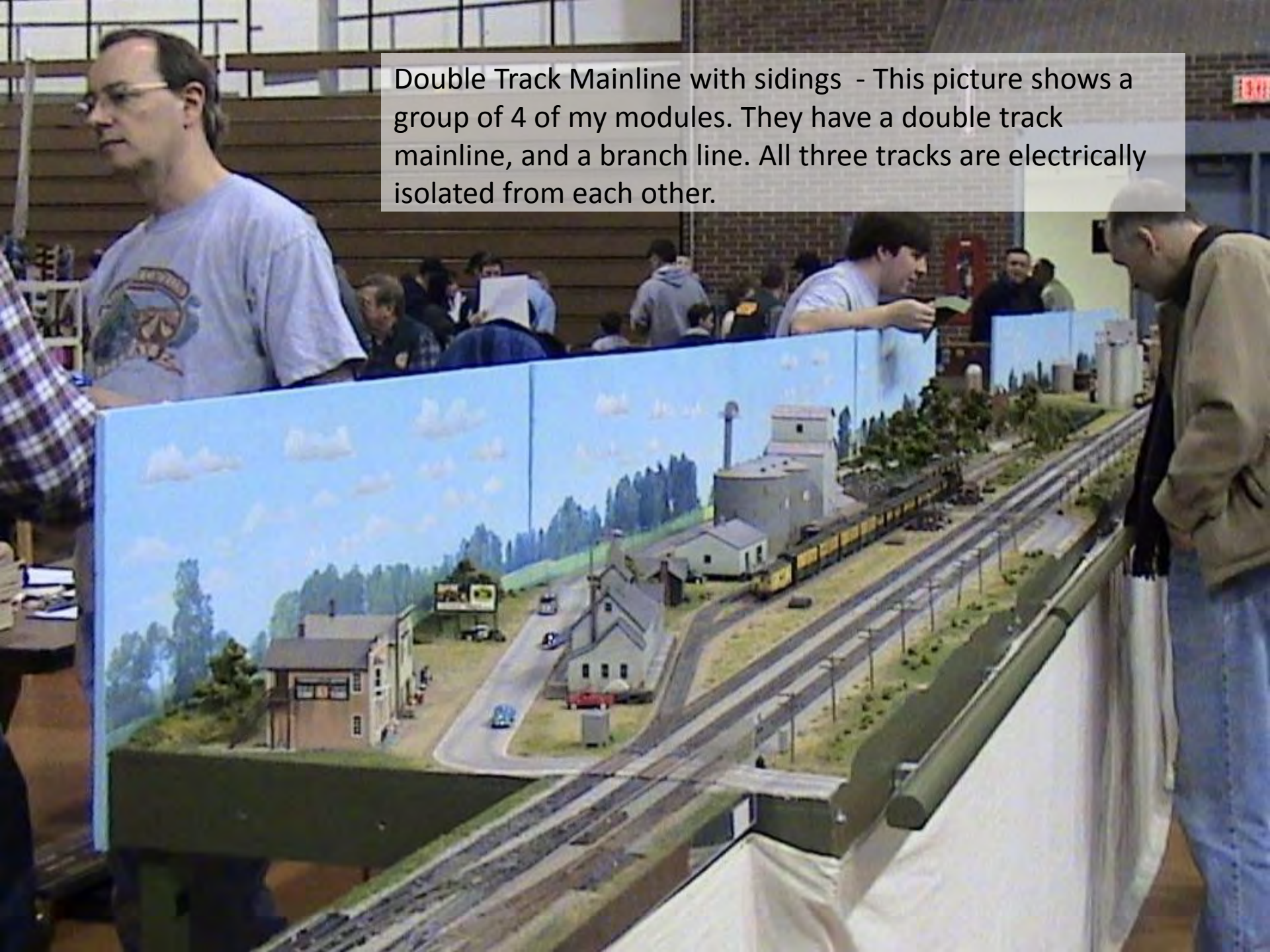
QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

3. Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

- All installed trackage must be properly wired so that two trains can be operated simultaneously (e.g. double track main, single track main with sidings, and block or command control).

Here are some photos of installed and properly wired trackage on my modular layout that meet this requirement.

Double Track Mainline with sidings - This picture shows a group of 4 of my modules. They have a double track mainline, and a branch line. All three tracks are electrically isolated from each other.



The inner branch line in this picture has two sidings coming off it. Each siding can be turned off or on from slide switches. The modular layout is wired to run three trains independently when powered by our DC power supplies. Or we can run as many as we want when in DCC mode using our radio controlled Digitrax DCC system.



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QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

3. Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

- Provide one additional electrical feature such as power operated turnouts, signaling, turnout indication, lighted buildings, etc.

Don't read more into this than is there. A powered turnout can be something as simple as an Atlas turnout with a switch machine. Think in terms of anything that runs off the 'Accessories' terminals of a power pack and you 're half way there.

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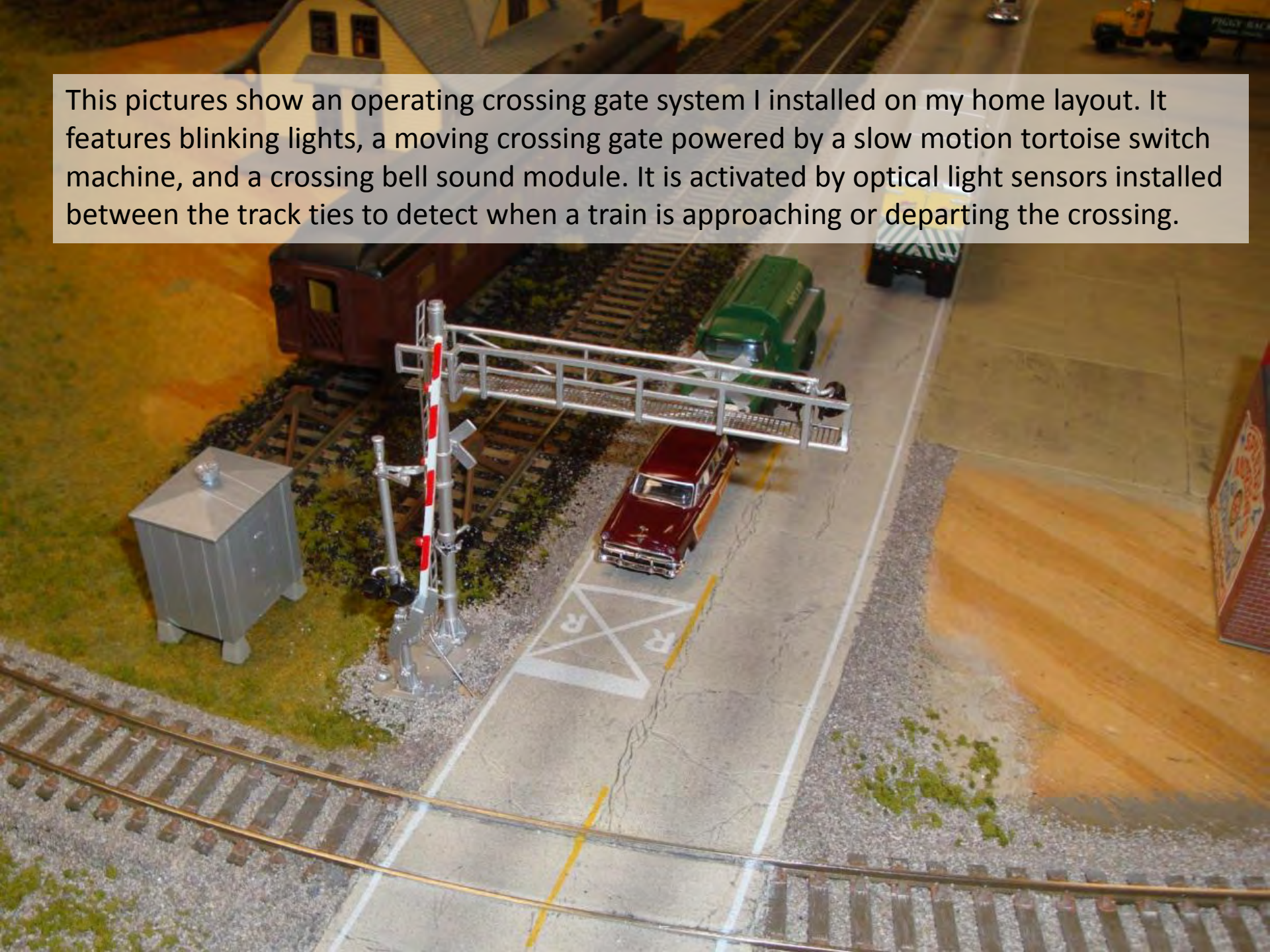
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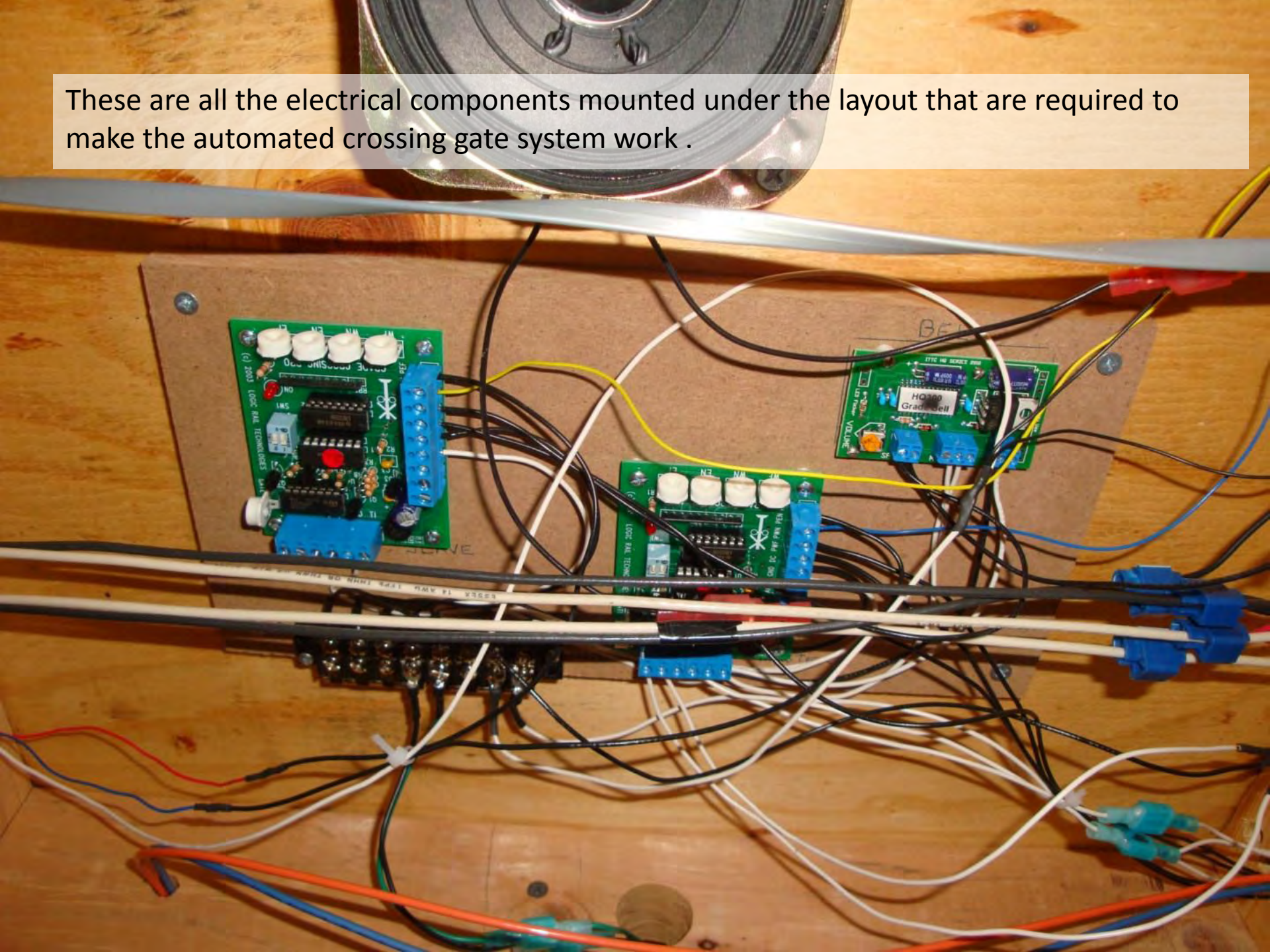
- Provide one additional electrical feature such as power operated turnouts, signaling, turnout indication, lighted buildings, etc.

Here are some photos of an automated crossing signal I built that I used to meet this requirement.

This pictures show an operating crossing gate system I installed on my home layout. It features blinking lights, a moving crossing gate powered by a slow motion tortoise switch machine, and a crossing bell sound module. It is activated by optical light sensors installed between the track ties to detect when a train is approaching or departing the crossing.



These are all the electrical components mounted under the layout that are required to make the automated crossing gate system work .



A simple lighted structure can also satisfy this part of the engineering requirement.



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Other things to remember:

Not all of these requirements need to be met on the same layout (or piece of layout). They don't even need to be met in the same scale! If you want to build G scale rolling stock, an N scale Model Railroad setting, and an HO scale layout for trackage and wiring, go ahead.

Golden Spike Award

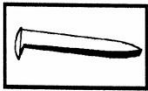


Other things to remember:

Also, the Golden Spike, as well as the other parts of the AP have a certain amount of flexibility. For example, suppose you and your (friend / spouse / child) work together on all your projects, but do twice the required amount (12+ units of rolling stock, 16+ square feet of layout, 10+ structures, etc.). You can both be considered, as long as you can show that you have each demonstrated the required skills.

Golden Spike Award



**ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM
GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD
APPLICATION FORM
May 2006**

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION FORM AND SEND TO YOUR REGIONAL OR DIVISIONAL AP CHAIR

Member's Name: _____ NMRA #: _____ EXP: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State/Prov: _____ Country: _____ Postal Code: _____

Date Submitted: _____ Region: _____

The Golden Spike Award will be awarded to any NMRA member who has completed the Qualifications Checklist, obtained the necessary signatures and who does not hold MMR status. It will be administered by the regional and divisional AP Chairs. AP regulations and definitions apply for scratchbuilding and detailing. To qualify for the award the member must complete the following checklist; obtain the signature of the divisional AP Chair or another NMRA member designated by the divisional Chair. The divisional Chair will submit the signed form to the regional AP Chair who will issue the Golden Spike Award certificate.

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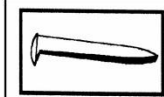
Witness: _____ Name: _____ NMRA #: _____

Regional AP Chair: _____ Region: _____

- Last step

- This section is for Divisional & Regional AP Chairs to sign

Golden Spike Award



ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM
GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD
APPLICATION FORM
May 2006

- Last step

- **Witness:** _____ **Name:** _____ **NMRA #:** _____
- **Regional AP Chair:** _____ **Region:** _____

Completion of the necessary signatures and who does not have NMRA status. It will be administered by the regional and divisional AP Chairs. AP regulations and definitions apply for scratchbuilding and detailing. To qualify for the award the member must complete the following checklist; obtain the signature of the divisional AP Chair or another NMRA member designated by the divisional Chair. The divisional Chair will submit the signed form to the regional AP Chair who will issue the Golden Spike Award certificate.

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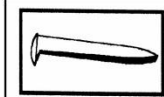
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Witness: _____ **Name:** _____ **NMRA #:** _____

Regional AP Chair: _____ **Region:** _____

- Arrange for your Divisional AP Chair to verify that you completed all the Qualification Checklist requirements.

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ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM
GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD
APPLICATION FORM
May 2006

- Last step

- **Witness:** _____ **Name:** _____ **NMRA #:** _____
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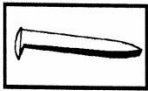
Witness: _____ **Name:** _____ **NMRA #:** _____

Regional AP Chair: _____ **Region:** _____

- Your Divisional AP Chair will sign your application and send it to the Regional AP Chair for processing.

Golden Spike Award



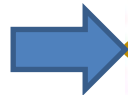
	ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD APPLICATION FORM May 2006
PLEASE COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION FORM AND SEND TO YOUR REGIONAL OR DIVISIONAL AP CHAIR	
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Regional AP Chair: _____ Region: _____	

- Application forms can be found on the NMRA web site.
- Go to www.nmra.org

Golden Spike Award



Click on the
Achievement
Program link



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Our NMRA Online Archives is now open for business! Taken from photo and art collections donated to the NMRA, the Online Archives already features over 10,000 images of locomotives, structures, cabooses, depots, and much more. Images include color and black & white photos, drawings, erection elevations, paint schemes, plans, and logos. NMRA members can download high-quality scans of any of the images for just \$2 each. Non-NMRA members can download scans for \$4 each. And browsing's free! Just click on the "NMRA Online Archives" link at the left to get started.

Looking for the Member's Only area? We think we have worked out most of the bugs. Do please let us know if you have issues registering. The Member area can be found [here](http://www.nmra.org/member/) at <http://www.nmra.org/member/>

The **National Model Railroad Association** (NMRA), an organization of model railroaders, advances the worldwide scale model railroading community through education and standards as well as advocacy and fellowship.

You can donate to the NMRA, including Diamond Club donations, through [this link](#).

More information on the **Diamond Club** can be found [here](#).

What's New

- Congratulations to Robert Mangrum, Gary Burdette, Joel Goldberg, and Allen Merta our newest MMRs.
- Tony Koester summary of Winter 2011 BOD meeting posted on the [BOD area](#).
- [S-7 as approved by BOD now online in the Standards area](#).
- Welcome to Doug Harding as new SIG Coordinator
- Congratulations to Tom Browning of the LSR, MMR #455.
- RIP Dean Freytag
- Congratulations to Andrew and David, MMRs #453 & 454.
- [S-7 has a proposed update to it](#). Take a look and comment back to S&C Department.
- Updated [Standard S-2](#) and newly [updated RP-21](#), passed at BOD meeting, now posted on web site as official. See S&RP area.

Why Join the NMRA?

Fellowship	Member Services	Standards	Achievement Program
Members at all levels of the NMRA are eager to share their knowledge and friendship in local divisions , regions and on the national level .	Being a member of the NMRA entitles you to a multitude of services , all geared toward expanding your enjoyment of the hobby.	The NMRA was the organization that set those Standards and Recommended Practices which still guide manufacturers and consumers alike.	The NMRA's Achievement Program , or "AP", is designed to help modelers improve their skills and get more out of their hobby. The "AP" gives recognition to members who have displayed a high degree of

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NMRA National, Grand Rapids, MI
Grand Rails 2012
www.gr2012.org

THE NATIONAL TRAIN SHOW

structures, track work, and wiring. It also recognizes service to the hobby and the NMRA, which are important as well. Use the links on the right to explore the different certificates and requirements.

We hope that you will soon find just how easy it is to participate in the Achievement Program, and if you are not yet involved start you off on the right foot. Please visit the [AP Staff Roster](#) page to find contact information for your Regional AP Manager.

Master Model Railroader

An NMRA member qualifies as a [Master Model Railroader](#) when he or she has obtained at least seven of the eleven Achievement Certificates provided that he or she has earned at least one Achievement Certificate in each of the four areas of the Regulations. Earning the title of Master Model Railroader is the ultimate goal for many participants in the Achievement Program.

- [NMRA Master Model Railroaders](#)
- [NMRA Master Model Railroaders listed by Region Membership.](#)

Take a minute to read this interesting history of the Achievement Program. The history was prepared by CJ Riley MMR #97 - additional material provided by: Willis Ehlert MMR #59, Rick Shoup MMR #234, and Phil Kohl [A History of the NMRA Achievement Program \(1961 - 2008\)](#)

Before you jump in to the website, take a minute to read this short article by Gerry Leone, MMR - This article appeared in a recent issue of *Scale Rails*. Gerry put some of his thoughts down on paper regarding his quest for the MMR. Give some thought to what Gerry has to say - He says it so well!
[What I learned by becoming an MMR - By Gerry Leone, MMR.](#)

Golden Spike Award

Some people may be reluctant to participate in the AP, because the rules seem difficult to understand. The following pages explain each of the different categories in the AP, and what the exact requirements are.

If you are new to the AP, may we recommend that you take a look at the [Golden Spike Award](#), although not an actual AP category its requirements are structured along the same lines.

Further Information

Contact National Achievement Program General Manager, Paul Richardson, MMR, achiev@hq.nmra.org, or your [Region or Division Achievement Program Manager](#) for more information.

■ [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)
■ ["The Masters" Articles \(updated 2009\)](#)
■ [Definitions](#)
■ [AP Awards](#)
■ [AP Staff](#)

Click on the link
for the Golden
Spike Award

