

Modeling the NC&StL Ry. A Clinic Hand-out by Tom R Knowles, Jr.

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This hand-out is by no means a comprehensive study. No way I can cover all bases in three pages!

Forward:

Early on, the available “factory ready” (RTR) models were very scarce. Over the years certain manufacturers honored this regional, southern railroad with such models as two different flatcars by Ulrich (With the same road number), a metal boxcar kit by both Varney and Athearn, a craftsman style outside braced caboose by Northeastern Scale Models and others. Walthers made certain decals for locomotives and cars that were in some cases grossly incorrect. If you wished to model the nuances of the character of the railroad, one by necessity must learn the art of conversion of existing other railroad products or building from scratch. Both serve the modeler well, and help develop an eye for detail and techniques to reproduce the prototype.

Philosophy and research:

In model building one must observe the “real” thing, either in photographs, drawings, descriptions or witnessing the object to be modeled. In later years, much more information has been gained, and observing the real thing has mostly faded from memory since the NC&StL was merged into the L&N in 1957 and is therefore a bit obscure.. Much information was lost at the time of the merger, and it has taken many years to accumulate information about the details of for instance, day-to-day operations and color schemes. Models are in themselves a compromise, but an excellent way to preserve the past without having a caboose in your backyard. My philosophy of modeling is to adopt for your own use one that suits your desired end results. That is, some folks thirst for strict adherence to prototype, others, not so much. There is room in the hobby for both extremes, including those things that are so far a-field as to be recognized as “something else”! If it pleases you, then go for it, I say. The end result desired often changes as time passes.

There are many sources on the prototype nowadays, and the Internet provides a cornucopia of text and photographs. There are preservation and historical societies as well as museums and archives that can also help in research. Keep in mind much of this type of effort is by volunteers and perhaps the info may not be “free for the asking” or may be protected by copyright. If your modeling efforts are important to you, you will seek out info wherever it can be found. In the dim light of time past, the memories may have failed, and a modeler might find they are dealing in probabilities.

For me, I am comfortable with almost everything in the forgoing philosophy, and have built models that are very loosely based on the prototype. I also have slaved over the accurate depiction of all sorts of details, rendering in miniature such things as the number of rivets around

the smokebox of a J-2 “Dixie” type (a scratch-built brass version of #567 is on display at the Cowan Railroad Museum). Thus I am guilty of “rivet counting”, but also have a J-3 made from five standard, available plastic model steam engines with a few added parts. At best it is a “stand-in” or caricature to the rivet counter, but provides a low cost in terms of money and time in obtaining a reasonable facsimile. This HO scale model of NC&StL 571 also at the Cowan Railroad Museum is on display at this convention.

Structures:

Typical NC&StL wooden structures were painted dark green and goldenrod yellow. The Floquil dark green is not dark enough, but weathered buildings faded to about this color. Floquil “Armor Yellow” is a decent stand-in for goldenrod. There was a standardization effort particularly of wood depots after the road reached its pinnacle, about 1890. A flexible board and batten plan was adopted that could be changed to whatever sizes were needed at whatever location. This very distinctly recognizable architecture was at the same time, “generic railroad” and “notably NC&StL.”. With long roof overhangs and end extensions the roof had very low pitch. The corbels along the outer perimeter were both structural and decorative components exact duplicates seen nowhere else. There was a variety as well, in that some stations and out-buildings of other architecture had been acquired with merged lines. Certain County Seat towns benefited from brick structures, but also having a similar feel to their design. Oddities such as Cowan and Bridgeport provide relief from monotony. There seems to be only one way to model an NC&StL depot: build it from scratch though I have found certain models can be modified to represent NC&StL buildings. Walthers “Clarksville Station” is one example made into a replica of Cordova or Lenox

Rolling stock:

NC&StL Freight cars were largely supplied by outside vendors, thus were of design common to many RR’s. Presently the NC&StL modeler is blessed with an astonishing variety of RTR models and really nice kits based on this standardization. Work train cars and many cabooses were made from existing repurposed rolling stock. Certain other stock such as the Dynamometer car (passed on to the L&N and converted to a MofW crew car) or pile drivers and cranes are not available commercially. The very modified “Hercules program” NC&StL GB 20 gondola cars, are not available, neither is the nine-panel gondola so far as I know. Modifying kits or scratch-building again is the solution for detailed models to be presented. So the modeler has options now and the market constantly changes..

Model passenger cars widely available are stand-ins with few exceptions. This situation is changing, and there is a company that supplies pre-cut sides to apply to core kits that will then resemble the home-built streamlined cars from the “City Of Memphis”. Walthers offers a very nice baggage car and Rapido has Pine series sleeper for the NC&StL. Branchline Models offers excellent cars and kits as well. Car sides for the “Georgian” may still be available.

Steam locomotives are a modeler’s problem in their mechanical complication. Re-detailing commercial engines can be daunting. There is only one maker—Overland-- of a highly accurate NC&StL steam engine, and it is out of production: it the beautiful J-3 “Dixie” in both stripe and yellow jacket forms. Bachman offered two steam engines 1) USRA Mountain that had to be redetailed for better accuracy and the 2) Decapod with the correct flanged stack but with a tender that was only close to right. IHC offered a consolidation 2-8-0 in NC lettering. Long ago, Key models offered a version of the USRA design Mikado with rectangular tank in brass. It is very rare, but there are/were many model makers that build decent USRA Mikes that can be redetailed. The Pacific type K-class represents a challenge, there being no really good current commercially

available starting point except perhaps the IHC/Mehano pacific. The list goes on if you wish to change an existing incorrect model.

Diesels are much simpler to model, as the railroad had four basic varieties from more or less standard manufacturer's catalogs. EMD for mainline service and some switchers, other switchers from ALCo, Baldwin and GE. Both the familiar F-unit and G-P's were employed in two color schemes: one for freight and one for passenger. Basic spotting features included no steam generators on F3/5/7 units. The steam generator was included in the B-unit instead. Certain units had their fuel tank skirting cut back for maintenance reasons. Custom mixed paint is NLA for passenger scheme, so a mix of CSX blue and a tad of Green make a good stand-in Wisconsin Central Mixed with Caboose red 1:1 is a pretty good match for as-new freight or switching units. Microscale and decals by John Arnold supply lettering and heralds. Point is, there are new opportunities for the NC&StL modeler's desire for NC&StL-specific models if you have not acquired scratch-building or "kit-mingling" skills.

Features Along the Right of Way:

It is gratifying to model a particular place and time, and have someone instantly recognize where and what the model is. A model railroad can be just that ,or even less than! The physical plant of the railroad is a combination of all the important (to you) characteristics of the prototype and so much more: it must contain elements that make sense from the historic, geologic, civil, mechanical and railroad engineering standpoints. Certain highly accurate and detailed vignettes are a good way to accomplish impression of the big picture capturing the flavor of the real thing. Incorporating specific features such as Semaphores, green and yellow line-side buildings and steam engines with Vandy tenders, rocky stratified cuts and architecturally correct depots and tool sheds are key to re-creating the impression of how the original must have been. But, if it stimulates the imagination, it is a good thing.

Tips and Techniques:

Decide on some criteria: an era to model, what scale, how much you are willing to invest in time and money, obtain information that serves your criteria. Study the prototype! Have a good, well-lit place to work, most modelers have a 2' square spot and are surrounded with parts, tools and supplies. A larger space to work is desirable. Know your limitations, but do not be afraid to try something new. Ask questions. Techniques for modeling are highly individual, and can be developed. Practice! It is a hobby! Do not fear failure! If you learn something important, share as much as you can. Being specific about a model and its features, can lead to "contesting"- contests are good, they help polish your skills and validate your successes.

It is my hope that you enjoyed and benefit from this clinic on NC&StL modeling. I am always glad to at least attempt to assist in sharing information and information on the many unanswered questions a clinic like this can bring up.

Thank you,

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