

Layout Tour: Tom Knapp's Pioneer Effort In N Scale Narrow Gauge

COLOR views of the Pacific Coast Railway appear on page 20. One of the first operating and fully-sceniced model railroads built in Nn3 and still one of the best. . .

Albin Burroughs



Model
Railroading
magazine's
MASTER
MODELER NO. 2

An overview of the 2 x 4-foot Adelaide mining/switching module as it appeared back in 1977. Most of these structures are Gloor Craft, Railhead or Muir kits. The trees are Woodland Scenics kits.

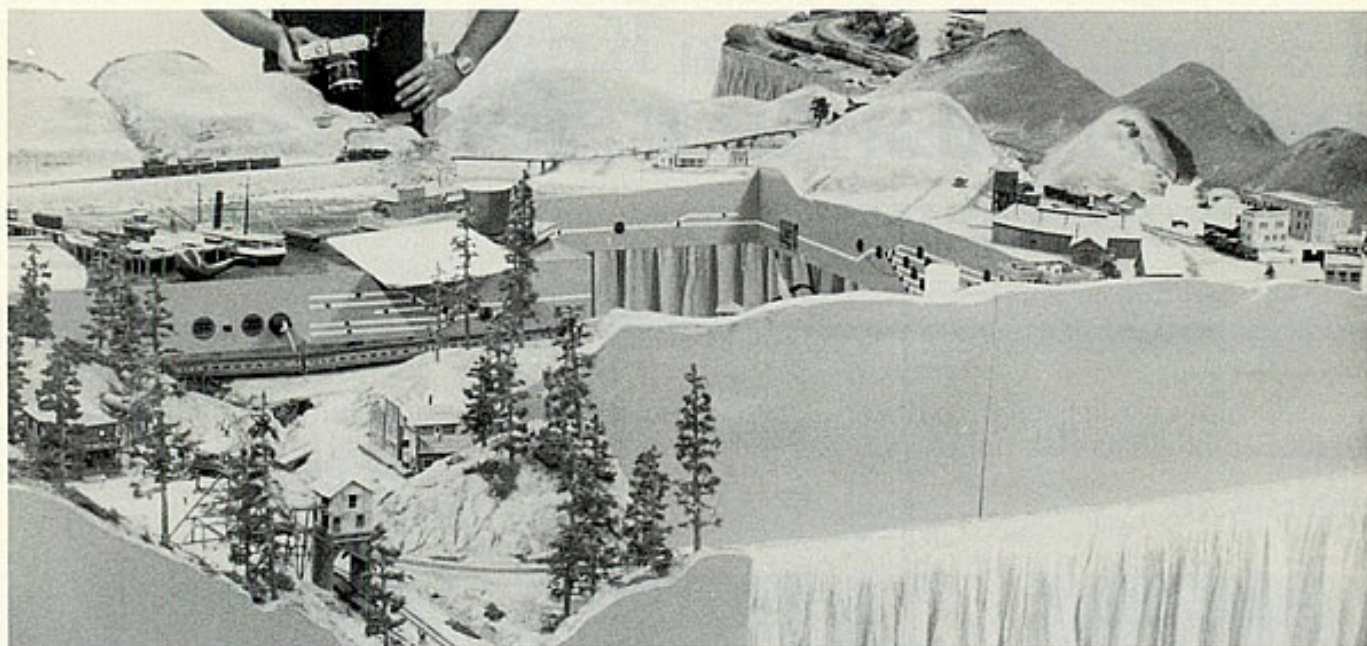
The advent of Marklin's Z scale locomotives and track has made it possible to build and operate a complete model railroad in the smallest space ever. Since the real railroads used tighter curves on most narrow gauge lines than they did on standard gauge, the $\frac{1}{220}$ scale curves of Z scale work ought to be about right for the $\frac{1}{160}$ scale curves of N scale narrow gauge. It's also helpful, of

course, that the track gauge of Z scale comes very close to 3 scale feet when measured with an N scale ruler. Hundreds of model railroaders recognized all this nearly a decade ago when Marklin first offered Z scale. Of all those dreamers, though, Tom Knapp was the first to complete and scenic an operating model railroad. He completed a 600mm x 1200mm (roughly, 2 x 4-foot) module to the

"International" standards of the Interail group, back in 1977. That fully-sceniced and operational mountain-based module he calls "Adelaide" is part of the layout you see here and in full color on page 20. Tom developed track laying techniques and conversion standards that made this small scale modeling practical.

The Adelaide mining district

NARROW GAUGE: THE PACIFIC COAST (RAILWAY) IN Nn3



An overall view of Tom Knapp's Nn3 layout with the original "Adelaide" module at the lower left, the wharf at Avila upper left and the downtown area of San Luis Obispo, California at far right — all in N scale. The access aisle leads in behind the pine trees at the left.

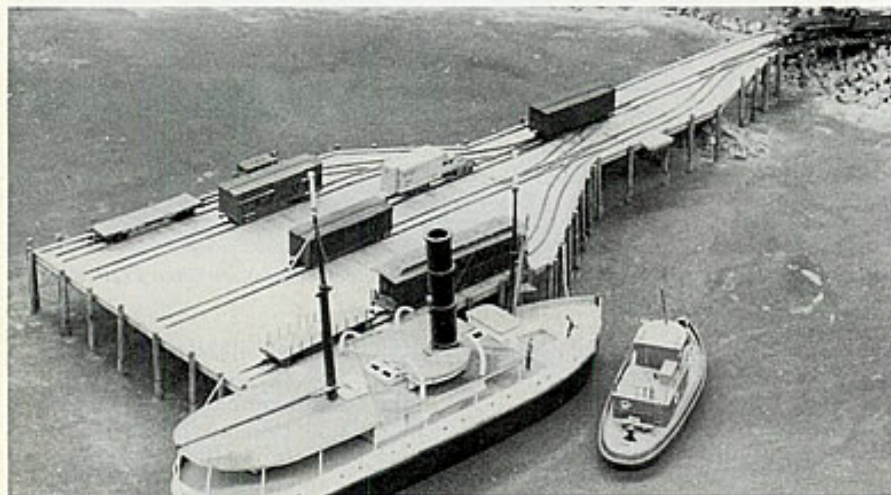
module was fictional. Tom then decided on a specific prototype that would extend from Adelaide to form the G-shaped 8 x 8-foot (approximately) walk-in layout in these photos. Tom displayed this layout and operated it at the National Model Railroad Association annual convention at San Mateo, California in 1981. The larger layout is a scale model of the narrow gauge Pacific Coast Railway into downtown San Luis Obispo, California. The real railroad is often confused with the South Pacific Coast a few hundred miles further north on the California coast. The Pacific Coast has been immortalized in the HO scale roundhouse kit by Detail Associates and Campbell's no. 447 HO scale

model of the San Luis Obispo freight station on the PC — Tom scratchbuilt these two structures in N scale, along with most of the other structures in the full-size town as they appeared near the turn of the century.

The focal point of Tom's model is the PC's operations out onto the Avila pier, including the blue Pacific waves breaking on the beach and the nearby lighthouse. Tom is currently working overseas so the layout is stored. It's exciting to imagine what his "third generation" Nn3 layout might become...

If you want more information on Nn3, purchase Bob Sloan's Nn3 MANUAL for \$5.00 plus 50¢ postage from him at 30 E. Pleasant Lake Rd.,

Dept. MRG, St. Paul, MN 55110. The 48-page book has side view drawings for over a hundred narrow gauge freight and passenger cars, locomotives and four-view drawings of several structures — all in N scale (Nn3) — to give you a better idea of just how small these models can be. There're also instructions, by Tom Knapp himself, on how he builds the N scale trackwork using code 40 rail and printed circuit board ties — far, far more realistic than utilizing Marklin's "mainline"-size track for branchline narrow gauge. Sloan also has several complete conversion kits for Marklin locomotives and a number of etched brass parts. Recently, Kadee has announced a Z scale coupler and arch bar trucks that are perfect for Nn3. They will also have pre-painted and lettered Nn3 box cars, gondolas and a caboose from the Nelson Grey tooling late in 1984. Gold Rush Models is producing both static model locomotives and, later, superstructure kits for Marklin chassis in cast metal (Gold Rush is a division of GHQ Models at 2634 Bryant St., Dept. MRG, Minneapolis, MN 55405). There's a photo of one of their models on page 95 of the Vol. 13, No. 4 issue of Model Railroading magazine. Even if you consider Nn3 too small to operate, you can use it as background scenery to simulate mine operations high on the hillside (like the operations around Gold Hill, Colorado on pages 27 through 39 of this issue). The structures, remember, are N scale so you can use a variety of kits as well as details like N scale model people and animals.



The Avila wharf on the Pacific Coast Railway circa 1895. Tom scratchbuilt just about everything on these California-prototype modules except the Marklin locomotive chassis. He uses some of Bob Sloan's etchings for the locomotive superstructures and tenders. Today, there are ready-built cars and trucks and near-to-scale couplers from Kadee to make Nn3 modeling "accessible" to just about anyone, regardless of their modeling skills.