

Rolling stock as scenery



A rebuilt Accurail boxcar and a detailed Rivarossi baggage car do double duty as scenery and, on occasion, as the cause of a special move on Dennis Eggert's HO Chicago & North Western. Dennis Eggert photo

When we think of scenery, it doesn't tend to be something that moves. Even vehicles are almost always permanently parked at specific locations, although there are now some animated options in that genre. Beyond that, "scenery" translates to landforms and the structures they surround. But there are some intriguing options.

The accompanying photo by talented modeler Dennis Eggert makes a strong case for mobile scenery in the form of maintenance-of-way equipment parked, permanently or temporarily, on a siding. We'll get to the specifics in a moment, but let's first consider the visuals.

Maintenance-of-way cars that provided the tools and materials to do the work at hand as well as places to eat and sleep were spotted on a siding. "Camp" cars were homes away from home for the maintenance crews that worked on the rights-of-way in the days before they were transported to the work site by high-rail vehicles or vans or housed in much more accommodating container-like mobile housing units.

Most if not all of them were converted from former revenue freight and passenger cars. Seeing ancient cars with truss rods or outlawed truck types in a more modern era was not uncommon.

Cuts of maintenance-of-way cars offer two opportunities for modelers. The first is to model some older equipment, such as wood or older steel freight or passenger cars. The second is that they can add operational challenges by being spotted on a passing track, thus taking it out of service for the day. They could also require an extra move by the local as the cars are taken to a new work site.

Mike Aufderheide cited two examples from the Monon during the 1940s: a Bridges & Buildings crew that was moved to a new location by a local, and a camp car coach that was tacked on to a passenger train to take workers back home on Friday evenings. He's done this on his layout and found that it adds interest.

Dennis Eggert built the MoW cars in the photo for his 1976-era Chicago & North

Western HO scale railroad. "It was common to see a set of these cars parked on a siding in a small town where work was being done on bridges, buildings, signal systems, or communication lines," Dennis recalls. "The cars provided a means to store tools, materials, and sometimes lodging for the work crews. I think of the cars as part of the scenery on my layout."

He built a boxcar using an Accurail 40-foot single-sheathed wood boxcar kit as the base model. To cut in the window frames, four of the angled braces needed to be removed, as none of the bracing matched the spacing on the prototype car. With the exception of the doors, new sides were scratchbuilt using styrene. New grab irons, stirrup steps, and cut levers were made using brass shapes. Dennis removed the fishbelly underframe on the car and added a new center sill and brake rigging.

Dennis built the baggage car using a 60-foot Rivarossi heavyweight model. The diaphragms were removed, coupler pockets were replaced, and buffers were added to the ends. He made new steps from brass strips.

Both cars were painted using acrylic paints and weathered using an airbrush; he also used artist pencils on the boxcar and chalks on the tool car.

I never went to the lengths that Dennis did on my Allegheny Midland, but I did see a tender from one of the Louisville & Nashville's "Big Emma" 2-8-4s parked on a siding deep in coal country. I had an extra Vanderbilt tender that was going

to be a bear to insert a Dynatrol receiver into, so I put a knuckle coupler on the stoker end and used it along with some other older rolling stock in MoW service – that is, as semi-mobile scenery, like Dennis's example. **MR**

CUTS OF MAINTENANCE-OF-WAY CARS OFFER TWO OPPORTUNITIES FOR MODELERS. – TONY