

C&NW'S "CHICLE PLATE ROAD"

This remnant of the KD line in Rockford/Loves Park, Ill., lends itself well to an industrial switching layout.

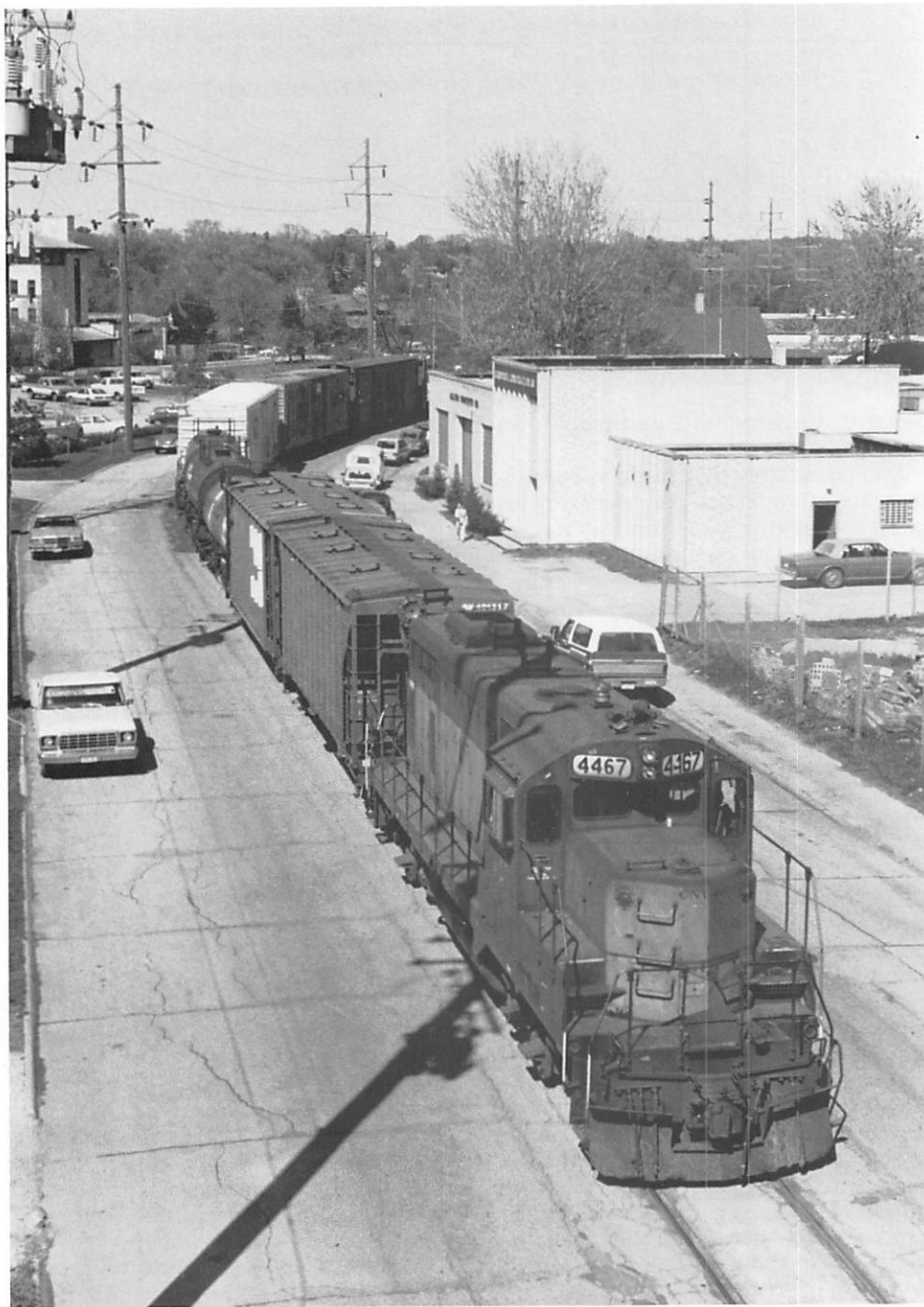
BY JERRY PYFER

**PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR
EXCEPT AS NOTED**

In 1861 a rail line was completed between Rockford, Ill., and Kenosha, Wis., for the Kenosha, Rockford & Rock Island Railroad. The fledgling railroad had considerable financial problems and just three years later was taken over by Chicago & North Western. The Kenosha-Rockford line became C&NW's Kenosha Division—otherwise known as the KD Line. After years of dwindling business, a steam switcher made the last trip from Rockford to Caledonia, Ill., in May 1937. A short time later, the line was abandoned between Loves Park (a "suburb" on Rockford's northeast side) and Caledonia, thus breaking the KD Line.

While it might be logical to think that the remaining Loves Park-Rockford stub of the KD Line sank into railroad obscurity, that's not the case. The remaining portion served an industrial corridor that prospers (more or less) to this day. Nonetheless, the future of the KD Line came into question when in the early 1980s C&NW seriously began considering abandonment of the KD's vital line—C&NW's Belvidere-Rockford route. Despite the revenue provided by industries on the KD Line, they were not enough to offset the expense of maintaining the 14 or so miles linking Belvidere (site of a major Chrysler facility and traffic source for C&NW) and Rockford—the latter already served by three other railroads.

Finally, in the mid-1980s, the City of Rockford—reeling from unemployment and the recession earmarking the early part of this decade—decided that one way to keep old businesses and attract new ones was to provide a sound transportation system, including quality rail lines. Spearheaded by the City of Rockford, the city and state arranged financial assistance whereby C&NW could upgrade the Belvidere-Rockford line and give a facelift to the



One of the highlights on the Loves Park branch is the trackage down the middle of Madison St. Here, GP7 4467 is on its way south, returning to C&NW's Rockford yard after working industries in Loves Park.



Right: Crossing the frozen Rock River in the winter of 1977, a short KD line train is pushed to the C&NW yard after working the branch.
Below: Acme Redi-Mix is a regular customer on the Loves Park Branch; this photo shows a rebuilt GP9 delivering hoppers of cement to the plant, while its train sits on the line's only siding. The main line is the far track at right.



KD branch. (The KD line had already undergone major upgrading late in the 1950s when its light rail was replaced with used mainline rail from C&NW double-track routes that were being single-tracked.)

Today, the "Chicle Plate Road" (which the KD branch is also nicknamed because of its major customer, Warner-Lambert, maker of Chiclets gum) sports heavy-duty welded rail to handle triweekly service. It also makes an attractive prototype for modelers to build an operation-oriented switching layout.

Daily operations

At Rockford, the KD line ties into C&NW's "Pumpkin Vine Branch" which originates in West Chicago, Ill. Today's Rockford jobs serving the Loves Park line, originate out of Belvidere, Ill. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. While usually the job is a one-day affair, occasional busy days will

cause the crew to go dead for time, forcing tie-up wherever the train is. The next day the crew picks up where it left off and finishes the job.

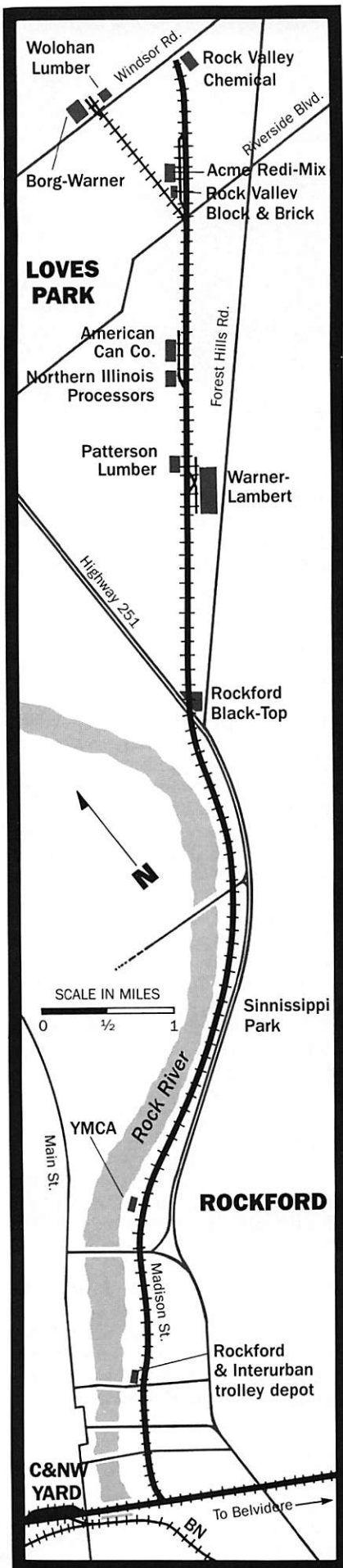
The train leaves Belvidere with a string of cars destined for Rockford, including traffic for the KD line. Upon arrival at Rockford yard, the single locomotive working the job (usually a rebuilt GP7 or GP9) drops its cars and starts lining up a train for the branch. Rockford yard used to have a switcher assigned to it; an SW1, Alco S2 or a rebuilt Baldwin S12 was commonly seen until the Chicago Great Western takeover, when an ex-CGW NW2 often got Rockford duty. Today, the Rockford job power does all the switching.

As the Loves Park train is assembled, cars are pulled from the original consist and from Burlington Northern interchange traffic. Before leaving, the locomotive normally goes to the west side of town to deliver 50-foot boxcars loaded with sheet foam insulation to the J.I. Case plant. Upon return, the

locomotive drops off empties from J.I. Case and ties on to the west end of its KD line train. Then, the train is pushed across the Rock River bridge past a trailing-point turnout, stops and heads engine-first up the Loves Park branch.

The first landmark the train passes is a new depot and car barn—wait, passenger service on the Chicle Plate Road? Actually the Rockford Park District, with financial help from the Rockford business community, operates a gasoline-powered trolley out of the depot. The trolley, a popular tourist attraction, runs over a short section of the old KD line on weekends, holidays and evenings during the summer. After passing the car barn, there is a mile of street trackage through an industrial and business area where the train shares the thoroughfare with automobiles. After leaving the street, the train follows the Rock River and passes through beautiful Sinnissippi Park. The park features greenhouses, a duck pond, flower gardens and a large (and somewhat bizarre) orange modern sculpture which has been the center of controversy in Rockford in recent years.

A short distance later, the train crosses city lines and enters Loves Park and also encounters Rockford Blacktop Construction Company and its array of heavy equipment. In a couple of minutes, the train arrives at the line's major customer, Warner-Lambert/American Chicle Group. The long-time presence of this gum and breath-freshener plant is the main reason this last remnant of the Kenosha Division has avoided abandonment. Warner-Lambert receives 50-ton covered hoppers of sugar, which are spotted in a car shed, and tank cars of corn syrup and alcohol. Because one of the Warner-Lambert spurs is encountered as a facing-point turnout, tank cars destined for this track will be dropped



MAPS: PROTOTYPE MODELER: Mark Danneman and Don Gulbrandsen



The largest customer on the Chicle Plate Road is Warner-Lambert/American Chicle Group, hence the nickname. On a snowy April day, outbound GP9 4154 spots sugar-laden hoppers in the plant's car shed; the three syrup-carrying tank cars will be spotted elsewhere on the train's return trip.

on the return trip. At the plant, a trackmobile is used to spot cars at various unloading points after they've been delivered by C&NW. Outbound finished products are today shipped by truck, but until a few years ago, 40- and 50-foot DF boxcars were used to take the products out by rail.

Across the track from Warner-Lambert is a spur serving Patterson Lumber Company; about four cars of lumber are delivered here each week. As the train continues north, Northern Illinois Processors is the next industry serviced. Each trip, 5 to 7 mechanical reefers are spotted here and a similar number are picked up. The company receives cheese by rail, processes it into other products and ships it out in the same type cars it was delivered in. At the end of the same spur sits National Can Company. Though it's no longer an active customer, at one time C&NW delivered tinplate in boxcars and shipped out finished cans in boxcars and scrap tin in gondolas. Another spur in this same area serves Blackhawk Cement, but it, too, is no longer shipping by rail.

The train soon nears the end of the

line, where a number of customers and a run-around track are located. With its own spur off the main, Sutherland Lumber is an infrequent rail patron, averaging less than a carload per week. Acme Redi-Mix also has their own service track and put it to better use, at least during the warm-weather months, receiving 3 to 4 cars of cement from each train. At the end of the old main line is Rock Valley Chemical, which normally has a tank car spotted in front of it. The company loads the tanker with waste chemicals over the course of a couple of weeks until C&NW delivers an empty tank car and removes the full one.

In years past, there was even more activity at the end of the main line. During the 1960s the track served as a team track for Blue Star Potato Chips; Pacific Fruit Express and Bangor & Aroostook reefers regularly delivered potatoes to the plant. At one time, the stubbed line extended beyond its current end to a sand quarry. The quarry owned a small switcher (possibly a Davenport two-axle unit) and several sand jennies to work the pit. A flagman was stationed at a shanty to protect the Windsor Road crossing when the train serviced the pit.

Also towards the end of the line is a long spur which serves three other customers. Valley Block & Brick gets regular boxcar loads of bricks to stock its large storage yard. At the end of the spur are Wolohan Lumber and Borg-Warner, each with its own service track. Wolohan gets about four carloads of lumber per week. Borg-Warner maintains a large storage pile of scrap metal shavings. When enough material collects, a rented crane loads

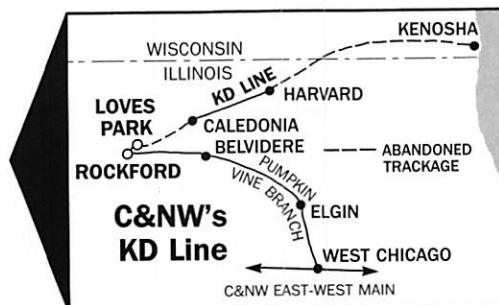


Table 1/

Suggested freight traffic for industries on a model version of C&NW's Loves Park branch

INDUSTRY	FREIGHT CAR TYPES	FREIGHT TRAFFIC
Freight house	Various boxcars	Inbound general merchandise
Rockford Millwork	Boxcars from lumber-producing regions	Inbound lumber; outbound finished millwork
Patterson Lumber	Boxcars, flat cars and bulkhead flat cars	Inbound lumber, poles and brick; hoppers of home heating coal into 1960s
Warner Lambert	Covered hoppers from western roads, large and small tank cars, C&NW 40' and 50' boxcars	Inbound sugar in 50-ton hoppers, alcohol in large tank cars, corn syrup in small tank cars, boxcars with cartons and pallets; outbound DF boxcars with finished products
Petroleum Products "Cement Pad"	Boxcars from oil-producing regions Bulkhead flat cars	Inbound packaged petroleum products Inbound drywall
Northern Illinois Processors	50' mechanical reefers, usually BN	Cheese products in and out in same cars
American Can Co.	50' boxcars—eastern roads inbound, C&NW outbound; C&NW gondolas	Inbound tinplate; outbound tin cans and scrap tinplate
Blackhawk Redi-Mix	Two-bay covered hoppers from Midwestern Roads	Inbound cement
Sutherland Lumber	Boxcars, flat cars and bulkhead flats	Inbound lumber products
Acme Redi-Mix	Two-bay covered hoppers from Midwestern roads	Inbound cement
Rock Valley Chemical	Chemical tank cars	Outbound used chemicals
Blue Star Snacks	Reefers from Northeastern roads or P.F.E.	Inbound potatoes
Rock Valley Brick & Block	Boxcars from Southeastern roads	Inbound bricks and decorative stone
Wolohan Lumber	Boxcars, flat cars and bulkhead flats	Inbound lumber products
Borg-Warner	C&NW gondolas	Outbound scrap metal
Rockford Black-Top	Hoppers, flat cars	Inbound hoppers with gravel and sand and flat cars with new machinery
Engine House	C&NW tank cars and covered hoppers	Inbound fuel and sand

the scrap metal into gondolas for shipment out by C&NW.

After working the end-of-line industries, the C&NW crew assembles their train for the return trip to Rockford yard, using the run-around track to get power on the forward end, and heads south. In the old days, one common job for the return trip was to drop cars on the main line by Parkside Distributors. Parkside Distributors would regularly get a single boxcar of petroleum products, while another customer would use a cement pad located across the tracks to unload bulkhead flatcars loaded with drywall. The next time the job worked the line, these empties would be shoved to the run-around.

After returning to the Belvidere line, the train is pushed over the Rock River bridge again, and any interchange cars for BN are cut off. Then, the locomotive runs around to the front of the train and starts the return trip to Belvidere.

Modeling the KD Line

Whether you desire a strict prototype Chicago & North Western layout or if you are a freelance modeler, this



Raw material (cheese) and finished product (processed cheese) are shipped in and out of Northern Illinois Processors in the same reefers. This scene shows inbound reefers being spotted at the plant; at right is an outbound car that has been pulled from the spur. In the background is American Can Company, another C&NW customer.



Left: In a Christmas-card scene from 1978, a CGW NW2 crawls through Smississippi Park with a southbound KD line train. **Below:** To celebrate completion of the Loves Park branch track upgrading, a C&NW special train ran on May 5, 1988. Here, the train comes off the KD line on its way to Belvidere; to the left is the Rock River bridge and trackage to Rockford yard.

line lends itself well to a switching operation capable of entertaining yourself and a couple of friends for an operating session. The track plan included with this article contains most of the industries found on the line today, plus a couple of others that were active shippers a few years back. As designed, the layout closely follows the prototype as an out-and-back line, but instead works around the walls of an 18 x 12-foot room. With a bit of selective compression you can reduce the layout to fit a smaller space if you desire.

A hidden yard, concealed behind a backdrop and offering stand-up space for an operator, is the real foundation of the line, tying it into the "real world." The yard feeds cars to the line and acts as a destination for traffic coming off the Loves Park branch, just as Belvidere acts as a start and finish point for the prototypical Rockford job. The yard provides adequate storage space to avoid repetition in the cars working the line and also has a runaround track.

The Rockford yard is another important point on the layout. Even though a switcher hasn't been assigned to Rockford in years, there's no reason why you can't have a switcher on your model version, allowing you to handle interchange traffic and block cars for the Rockford job before it arrives. On the other hand, it would actually be more prototypical to do all switching with the road power. This track plan does not allow a physical interchange with BN; interchange traffic will have to be exchanged by hand between operating sessions, unless you have room to add an additional hidden yard.

Operate this layout much as C&NW works the prototype line. You don't need to add any complicated trackage to increase switching games; the real line has a wide variety of in-

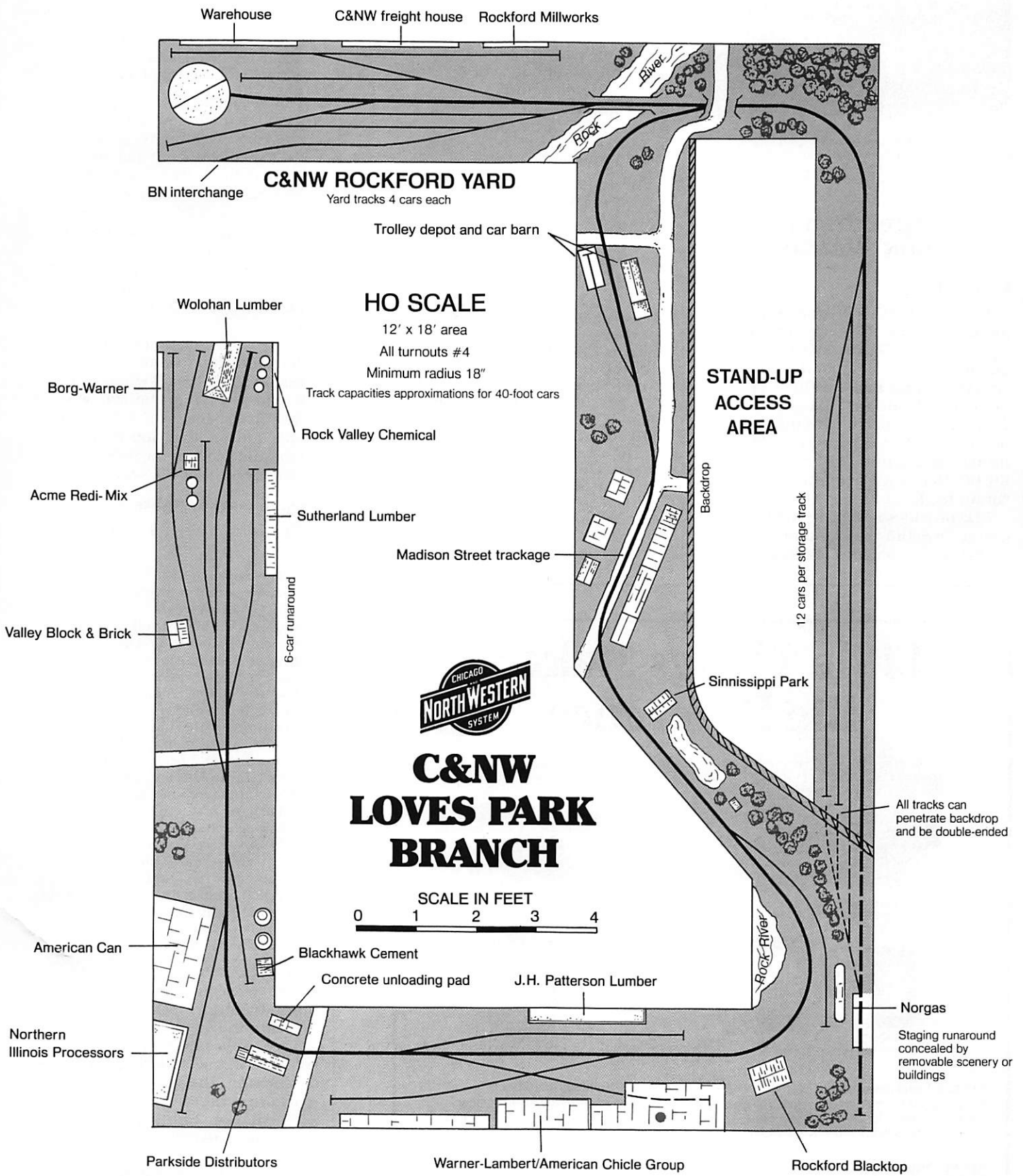


Tom Harris

dustries and enough special handling requirements to make for a varied and challenging operating session. Your model power needs will be simple. Choose a couple of locomotives to share the work duties, preferably either a high- or low-nose rebuilt GP7 or a rebuilt GP9. Table 1 describes traffic for each of the industries to let you assemble a realistic fleet of freight cars. The variety in customers will make for a great mixture of rolling stock on the layout.

You may also wish to add some special movements to your line for some variety and the prototype offers a cou-

ple of interesting possibilities. You could run your own tourist trolley, fashioned after Rockford's modern operation. Another idea is a circus train; once, a Barnum & Bailey train ran up the entire length of the Loves Park line for performances held at a trackside location. More recently, a "mini-400" operated on the line on May 6, 1988 (in part, sponsored by Warner-Lambert) to celebrate the completion of the Belvidere-Loves Park track rebuilding project. The train, with two F's and a four-car consist, was a welcome treat for a line which was on the verge of abandonment just a few years ago.



Track plan design by Jerry Pyfer
Rendition by PROTOTYPE MODELER: Mark Danneman