

From Mr. DCC's workbench

Making your small layout run bigger

I'm enjoying some limited operations on the HO shelf layout discussed in this month's column. However, initially I couldn't do all that I wished to bring a session full circle. I'm going to introduce you to an operations tool that I have used to increase the fun on my SMVRR shelf layout. This layout is oriented as if you were looking south, with East to the left.

There are three geographically different areas that the Santa Maria Valley Railroad served:

- The Southern Pacific (SP) interchange and yard in Guadalupe on the west
- Industries throughout the valley
- The oil fields at Roadamite in the hills 12 miles to the east

I started operations by setting up my shelf layout to represent the industries in Santa Maria. That didn't have the realism of handling tankers coming from Roadamite to the refinery and

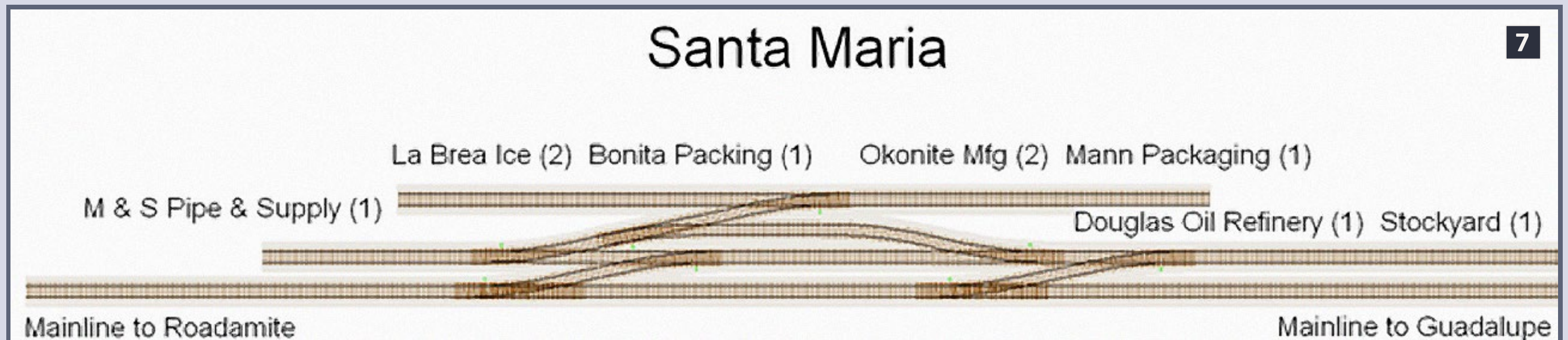
out to the world (the original reason for the prototype). With the limited space, modeling of the Guadalupe interchange consisted of a single track with no run-around or yard track.

So, one day I got the idea for Dynamic Track Allocation. Sounds complicated, but it's not. It is just a way of saying that what a physical track model can change throughout a session. Let's look at a session using this method. It takes about an hour to run.

The engineer goes on duty in the center of the railroad – the original model. He services the industries. The tracks are allocated as shown in figure 7. The numbers after a location are the quantity of cars that can be spotted there. If there is a set-out for the M&S Pipe, it needs to be off-spot just now.

While servicing Santa Maria, there will, no doubt, be cars for Roadamite and Guadalupe. These cars are placed on the front track where labeled.

Next comes the run to Roadamite with empty tanks and cars hauling supplies. This is modeled by moving the cars being held on the "To Roadamite" section as far to the right



7: The Santa Maria track allocation



8: The Roadamite track allocation

as can be achieved so the loco can be positioned on their left, ready to pull the cars to Roadamite. Remember, there may be cars spotted at the industries and on the “To Guadalupe” tracks. The run to Roadamite (about ½ hour at prototype speed) can be simulated by leaving the made-up train and taking a break. After the break, the train is deemed to have arrived in Roadamite and the tracks take on new faces as shown in figure 8.

Note that the track layout is the same, just with some new labels. The Yard Track will be needed to shuffle cars – that is the reason for the M&S Pipe traffic being off-spotted previously. A runaround is needed to get the loco on the west (right) end of the train. Once empties are spotted on the Arrival-Departure track and loaded cars are attached to the loco, it is time to head back to Santa Maria, where the track definitions revert to those in figure 7. Time for another short break while this run is made.

Once in Santa Maria, off-spots are cleared, if possible. Any tankers for the refinery are off-spotted. The train for Guadalupe

is assembled. The run to Guadalupe is simulated by another pause in the action, perhaps a soda this time?

When the train arrives in Guadalupe, the tracks are designated as shown in figure 9. Notice here there is a conflict between the refinery and stockyard tracks (8) and the Guadalupe Yard Track #1 (9). Any cars previously spotted at the refinery or stock yard are temporarily moved to some available space elsewhere, if the yard track is needed for moves in Guadalupe. Not prototypical, but needed to make the Guadalupe scenario function, just like we didn't spot a car at M&S in the first part of this session.

Once the interchange cars are spotted on the Arrival-Departure track and the loco is in the center of the layout, the future of the outbound cars is in the hands of the SP. That future consists of removing and replacing some cars and flipping waybills on others. Once the SP finishes its work, there is a new consist to pull back to Santa Maria, ready to spot any off-spot cars and start over servicing the industries.

Guadalupe



9: The Guadalupe track allocation

Changing the identification of physical tracks can make a small layout play bigger. I have these three track plans printed on a single sheet of paper and posted above the layout as a reminder, as shown in figure 6. ■

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