



Saranac & Wolf

Let 'em rip on the main line while you're busy upstairs shifting

BY LEONARD BLUMENSCHINE
PHOTO BY MARTIN SHAMES

IT'S sort of like packing a pair of long pants into a short suitcase. You put the cuffs against one end and accordion-fold the rest, first to the right, then to the left.

The bottom tier of the Saranac & Wolf Pond Ry. is a straight and narrow dogbone, mated at the middle with facing turnouts that form passing sidings and also act as direction reversers. Around the back, a branch takes you climbing up the first fold to end at the Saranac passenger and engine terminals perched over one loop. From here a switchback movement shunts you in the opposite direction into the freight yard and industrial tracks. These are built over the left end of the dogbone.

Wolf Pond, not much of a burg in anybody's book, is represented on the main line by a pair of sidings. One track feeds a stock pen and slaughterhouse, plus a grain and coal mill (the former a Frank Ellison project [May 1950 MR], the latter George Allen's famous Mifflinburg Mill [July 1952 MR]). The other boasts a closet-size passenger stop with a boxcar freight house and a sawmill. Additional industries backdropping the upper-tier freight yard go in for grain elevating, boxmaking, furniture building, and reef-er icing.

The Saranac terminals can muster half a dozen assorted passenger cars for the summer Adirondack tourist trade (twenties to thirties style) and handle an equal number of engines in a good-sized service facility that includes Eric Stevens's clas-

sic coaling station [October 1951 MR et seq.], an oil fuel rack, an ash hoist, and a 116-foot turntable big enough to take on everything, including a visiting Challenger engine which comes mammothing in from the Alleghenies every once in a while.

In designing the plan I have tried to select the various industries so that the Saranac plants feed the Wolf Pond edifices, and vice versa. This calls for a lot of switching, freight peddling, and out-and-backing. But the four- or five-car shorties had better watch out, because the dogbone is meant to be shared main line.

Although it's no great shakes in length, and the sort-of easement curves narrow to 22' radius (if in HO) in the tunnels, there's still enough to allow some parading, New York Central style, plus some interchanging at Wolf Pond.

Operated at its simplest, one-man fashion, you can let 'em rip on the main line while you're busy upstairs shifting cars, making up trains, and pampering locomotives. What interested me most was that each of these operations uses the full 16½-foot span of the benchwork. Instead of compacting the service and yard areas inside the loops, the accordion-folding allows each to spread right out to the edges, creating, in a way, two layouts in one: a continuous-run job and a shelf-switcher.

Like so many plans, this was drawn to fit a particular space: a 9 x 25-foot ground-level playroom abutting a garage. One end of it is ruined for railroading by opposing doors to the garage and the basement, a stairway, a clothes-storage closet, and a perpetually out-of-tune console piano. The S&WP is meant to fill what is left and still leave space to get at bookshelves, hi-fi equipment along the wall at the operator's back, and a pair of win-

dows 18" away from the turntable end of the benchwork.

Anyway, I fancied the plan enough that I decided to see what it would look like in miniature. The color photograph (by an advertising photographer friend, Martin Shames) shows the model. It was built in the scale of the original drawing, 1" to the foot. For fun I assembled it as if I were building the actual layout.

Underneath the track and scenery is L-girder benchwork cut from balsa strips: ¼" x ¾" and ¼" x ¼" for the girders, joists, and risers (as close as I could get to 1 x 3 and 1 x 4 lumber), plus ⅛" x ⅛" lengths for the 2 x 2 legs. I followed Kinnickinnic Railway & Dock Co. methods [January 1972 MR], particularly for the five rear triangular support brackets. These are spaced to be screwed to studs in the paneled playroom wall.

The track plan was traced onto and cut from mat board. This was white-glued to ¼" balsa sheet, resulting in a sandwich resembling plywood-Homasote roadbed. I didn't intend to go beyond this skeleton-framework appearance of roadbed on risers over benchwork, but a visitor to the office (that's where it was built during a month of pleasant lunch hours) allowed as how scenery and buildings would be nice.

Ordinary textured men's room paper towels proved helpful, just as they are for zip-texture scenery on full-size layouts. First I cut and tried pieces, often many times because the scale is so small. Then, before gluing in place, I applied color from broad- and narrow-tipped felt markers in a range of the usual earth, stone, and greenery colors. After each scenic element was glued and dry, I trimmed any excess with a single-edged blade. The result was startling. Although I gave up trying to make ¼"-tall trees,



Pond Ry.

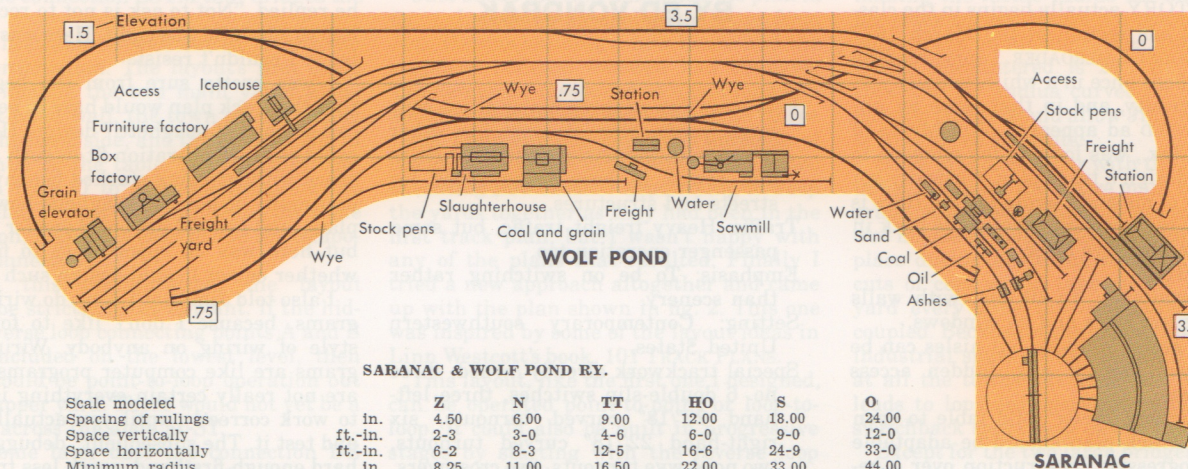
cars, making up trains, and pampering locomotives

the felt tips tended to raise fibers on the paper when applied and thus make what look like shrubs and weeds in several places. Also, the pebbled texture of the towel, rubbed lightly with the felt markers so as not to flatten it, made a dandy stone retaining wall which faces much of the upper yard and terminal tier.

The buildings were a challenge, but turned out to be the most fun. One-ply Strathmore paper was just right. First, I laid out all four walls on a flat, after making series of parallel lines at door, window, and roof heights. Felt pens and color pencils did the rest, giving me, among others, a pullman-green station, a weatherbeaten roundhouse, and a rusty corrugated-sheet grain elevator

and sawmill. Once the flats and roofs were cut out with single-edged blades (I must have used two dozen), they were folded and white-glued together. It was even possible to cut open a few stall doors on the roundhouse and make the turntable turn via a wheel mounted beneath the benchwork.

So much for an exercise in 16½". I wouldn't recommend doing it for every plan you conceive, but it's certainly a nifty way to create a conversation piece and to visualize, in three dimensions, that favorite layout you've always wanted to build. My only letdown: the citizen who eyed the model in the office one day and asked, "So, okay. Where are the choo-choos?"



SARANAC & WOLF POND RY.

	Z	N	TT	HO	S	O
Scale modeled						
Spacing of rulings	in. 4.50	6.00	9.00	12.00	18.00	24.00
Space vertically	ft.-in. 2-3	3-0	4-6	6-0	9-0	12-0
Space horizontally	ft.-in. 6-2	8-3	12-5	16-6	24-9	33-0
Minimum radius	in. 8.25	11.00	16.50	22.00	33.00	44.00
Parallel straight track spacing	in. .79	1.09	1.45	2.00	2.72	3.63
Multiply elevations by	in. .38	.50	.75	1.00	1.50	2.00