



Grand Trunk Western No. 8084 pulls a boxcar loaded with cereal from 29 Building at the Post Cereal plant in Battle Creek, Mich. Large industrial complexes like this can receive and ship many different kinds of freight, making them great modeling subjects. Laurence Bolton photo

What goes into modeling a breakfast cereal factory?

Q Has *Model Railroader* ever done a feature on modeling a cereal plant such as Kellogg's or Post? I'm building a 12" by 10'-6" shelf layout that will be entirely that one industry. But I'm not sure how best to lay out the various structures and car spots for covered hoppers, boxcars, food-grade tank cars, etc.

John Buckley, Montague, Mich.

A Yes, we did. Check out the article "Switching for breakfast" in our annual special issue *Model Railroad Planning 2014*. (I hope you have that one in your back issue stash, because our warehouse is sold out.) In that article, authors Lawrence Bolton and Bill Neale presented room-sized N scale and HO scale track plans based on the Post Cereals factory complex in Battle Creek, Mich.

I've always found single-industry track plans fascinating. To support such a layout, an industry must of course be big and busy, receive and ship a broad variety of cargos, and ideally feature in-plant switching. The Post plant is a perfect candidate for this kind of layout. The massive complex is made up of dozens of buildings, silos, and storage tanks, with a dedicated 13-track yard plus more than 80 car spots. Some buildings had "A tracks," parallel second tracks where boxcars were loaded or unloaded via deck plates between cars.

When you think of what cargos might be received by a breakfast cereal plant, grain, flour, sugar, and packaging materials are obvious. But the Post plant both receives and ships so much more. For many years, coal delivered by rail powered the complex. The plant has its own packaging factory, which received paper, cardboard, plastic, and wax, and shipped out finished packaging for other manufacturers in addition to that needed in-plant. The whole grains and processed flours

received include white wheat, red wheat, rice, corn, oats, grits, and bran, each requiring its own dedicated car spots, unloading mechanisms, and storage silos. Sweeteners come in as liquid sugar, corn syrup, and granular sugar. Other car spots receive raisins, nuts, cooking oil, food coloring, preservatives, other flavorings and additives, and occasional boxcars of replacement machinery.

In addition to shipping finished cereal and packaging materials for other customers, the leftover byproducts of grain processing are packaged and shipped as animal feed. The plant also makes Tang drink mix.

Rail traffic peaked in the 1970s, when the plant was served by Grand Trunk Western (using Alco switchers) in the first and second shifts and Penn Central overnight (with an ex-New York Central Geep). After that peak, more cargos – particularly finished products – began to be handled by trucks.

To model such a complex, you'll need a variety of nondescript brick factory and warehouse buildings. The factory should still provide plenty of visual interest, though, with lots of grain silos, storage tanks for oil and sweeteners, grain elevators, and smokestacks. The buildings should be connected by a plethora of conveyors, pipes, and overhead bridges. To facilitate switching, the many sheds and awnings that protect the cargos during loading and unloading will have to be omitted or made removable.

For a couple of ideas of how you could turn the Post Cereal plant into a model railroad, check out our Track Plan Database (trains.com/mrr/how-to/track-plan-database) for the HO scale and N scale plans we published with that MRP 2014 article.

Breakfast – it's the most important switch job of the day!

Post cereal plant in Battle Creek, Mich.

H0 scale (1:87.1)
 Room size: 12 x 14 feet
 Scale of plan: 1/2" = 1'-0", 24" grid
 Illustration by Rick Johnson

Find more plans online in the
 ModelRailroader.com Track Plan Database.



