

# THE FOSS LANDING DIORAMA: RUMINATIONS ON THE ART OF TRIAL AND ERROR

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PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR  
1:87.1 SCALE

**T**HE ART OF building craftsman kits seems to be losing appeal. Pick up any typical model train magazine and most advertisements are for "ready-to-run" items. Why? Ask almost any teenager what he would rather do, build a craftsman kit or play an electronic game; he will provide the answer.

Although my generation has its faults, I'm still proud to build craftsman kits. (I'm 48 and avoid wearing glasses

when I look in a mirror to keep from seeing all the wrinkles.) I like HO scale and often find myself gazing at my dioramas to relive the joy of building them. I consider the completed scenes to be artwork. Some friends have caught me doing that and wonder, "What's wrong with Scott?"

I even insured my dioramas until the agent told me they were worth only the price of a replacement kit.



Apparently neither the insurance company nor most people have a clue as to what goes into building a typical diorama.

Creating a diorama is an art and, to help you perfect

your own approach to that art, I will share some techniques. I have copied most but a few result from errors. The resulting panic and desperation sometimes helped me devise new techniques, my few original contributions.

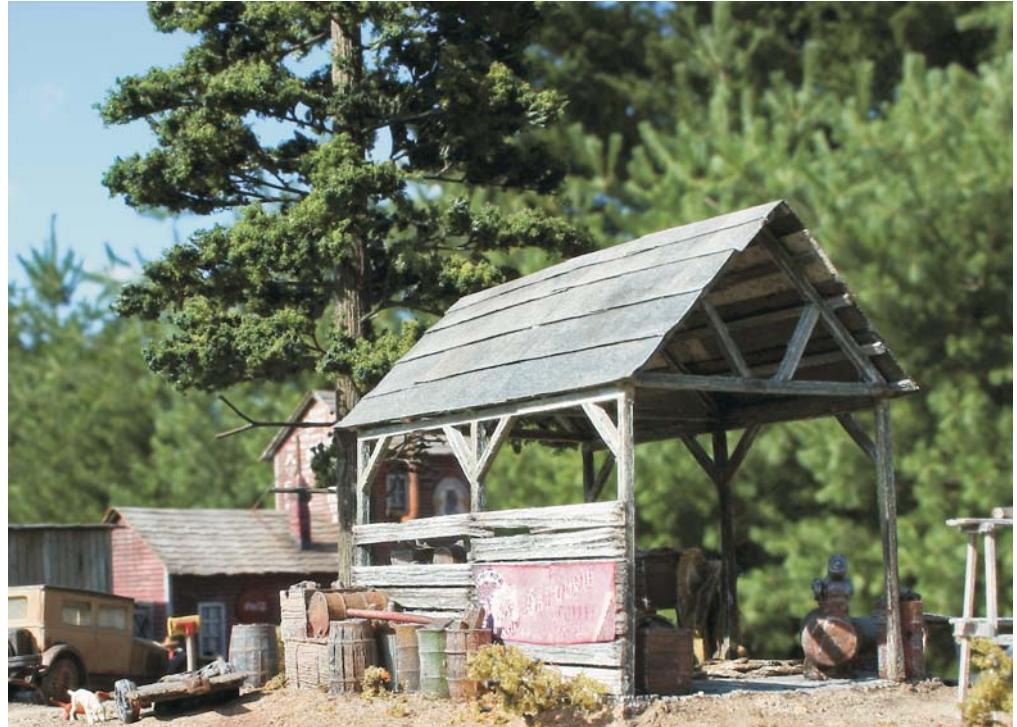


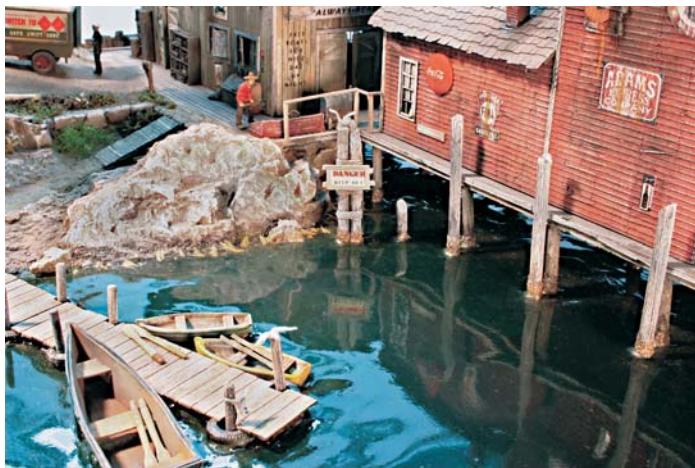


The combination has helped me find my approach to our hobby and may help you, too.

For example, find the station wagon in the scene. It's a 1926 Essex Coach model by Highway Miniatures, formerly Jordan Products. I wanted it to be a new car with a glossy finish. I painted the body with tan Floquil lacquer base railroad paint and intended to follow that with a gloss coat. But I was impatient and picked up the model before the paint was dry. My fingers rubbed the paint off all four edges of the car body. I was more frustrated than words can express and irrationally asked myself, "Why do I need this car anyway? Or maybe I can use it on another scene. Or maybe if I ignore it, it will go away." But I couldn't ignore it. And I couldn't repaint it without the second application obscuring most of the molded detail.

Then I remembered an article explaining how to apply rust colored paint where the old paint had rubbed off to emulate an old weathered look. So I applied the rust and





it looked great! Would I ever have done that on my own? No. But in that case an accident resulted in success, maybe in some ways like the famous Apollo 13 moon launch history now records as a “successful failure”.

I suggest purchasing a large inventory of Highway Miniatures vehicle kits. They sell horse and buggy models and at least two wagons with horses. All go together very nicely, the parts line up precisely, and the completed models add to any scene. The tractor in the diorama also is one of their kits; so is the delivery truck.

I paint vehicle kits with a brush and Floquil paints because airbrushing takes too long. After I dust them with pastel chalks any fine brush strokes disappear. I paint the complete model just before installing the windshields and side windows. Bragdon Enterprises sells a set of eight powdered chalks I barely can live without. One shade, the color of light tan dirt, works especially well on vehicles to emulate a layer of light dust. Almost nothing goes on my scenes unless it is dusty and dirty.

Another tip is to think “outside the box”; it’s good to be different. For example I studied how Brett Gallant



