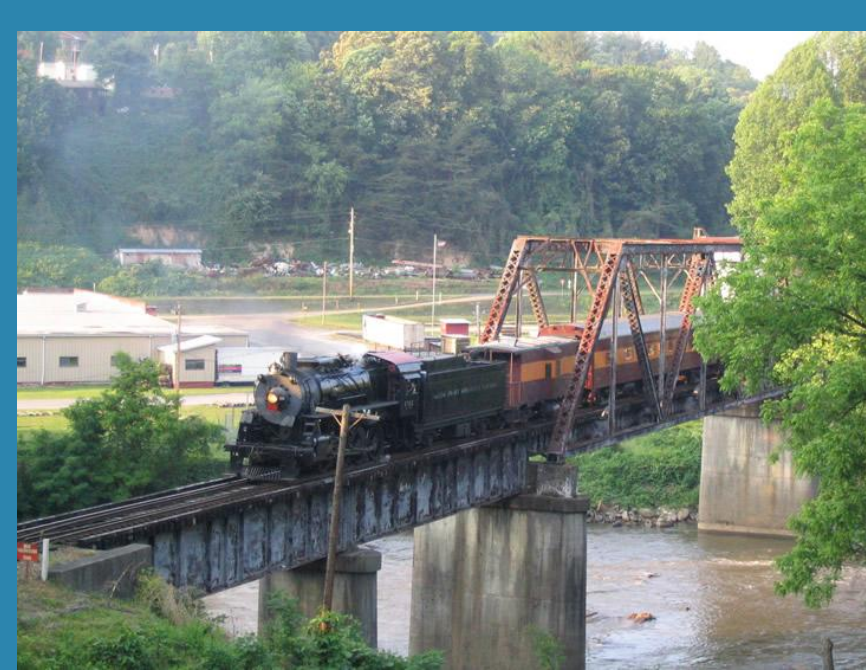




The Franklin
Southern Backstory:
What? Why?
Where? When?
How?



What?

- The Smoky Mountains of Western North Carolina
- I'm not from the area.
- I don't have family in the area.
- I hadn't been there until my first and only visit in 2022.

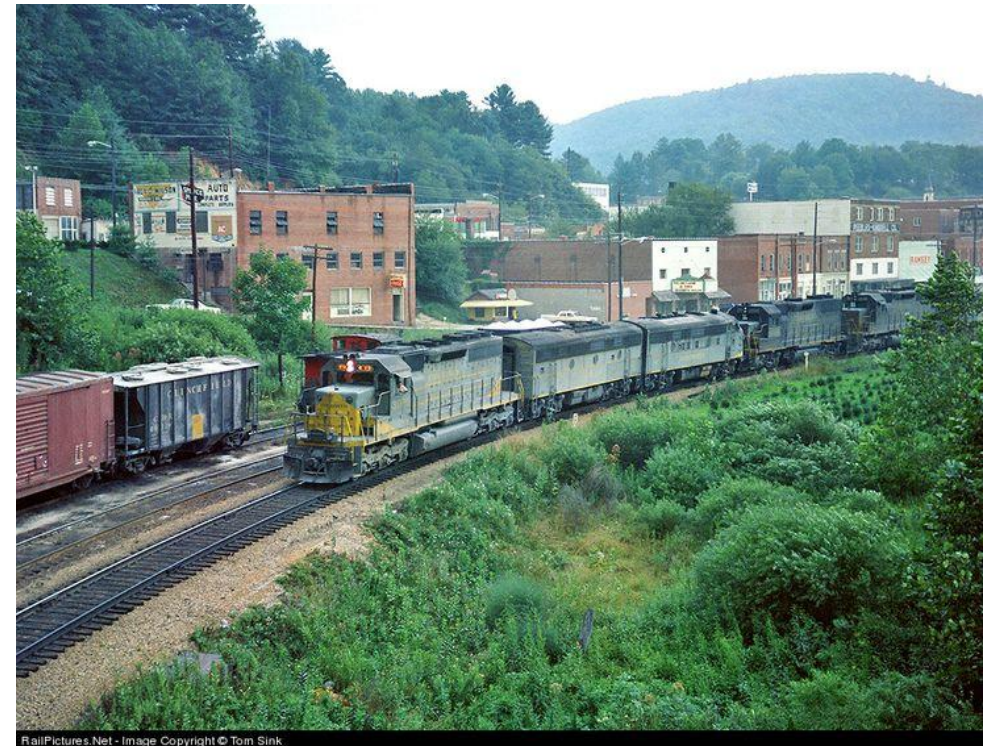


Why?

- Why is complicated.

Layout History

- Named in the 1980's after my father's initials (Frank Shifter, Jr.)
- Gave me his childhood O scale all metal train set and a 60's Lionel train set as a Christmas present.
- Interest in east Appalachia was inspired by 1979 MR article about in the Clinchfield in N scale.



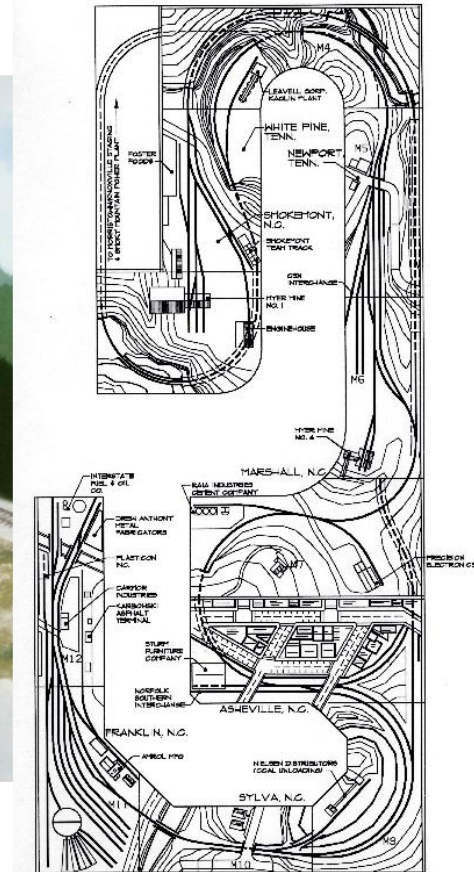
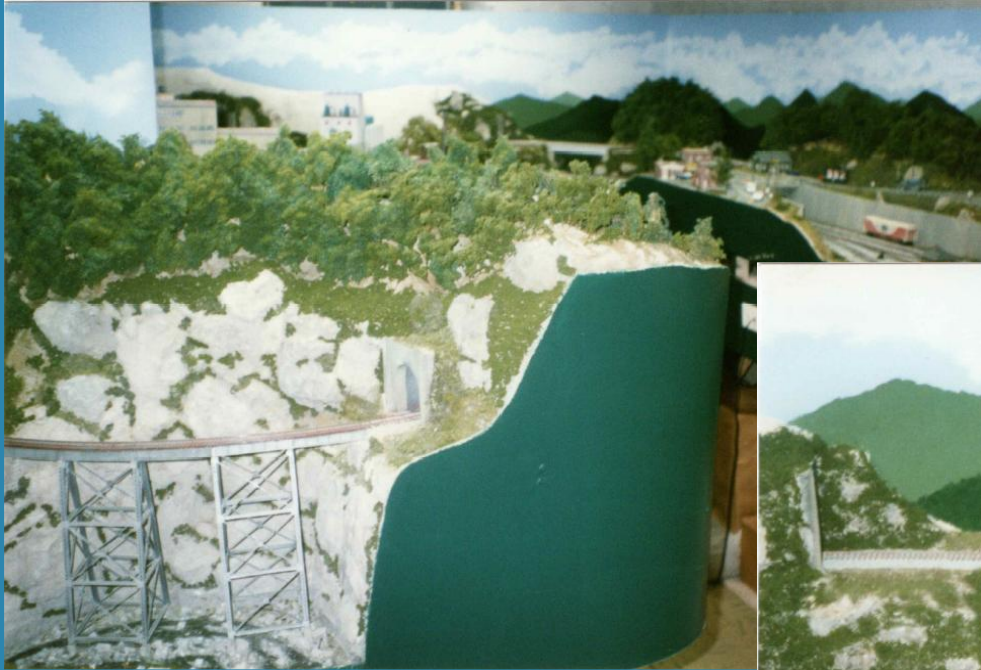
Layout History

- Started first adult layout in Kansas City in 1986.
- Based on MR track plan.
- Not designed for operations.



Layout History

- 2nd layout designed for operations. Never operated.
- Not designed for operations.
- Chosen to be on 1998 NMRA National Convention layout tour.



Layout History

- 3rd layout designed for operations. Never had formal op sessions.
- Developed modeling, weathering and backdrop painting skills.



Layout History

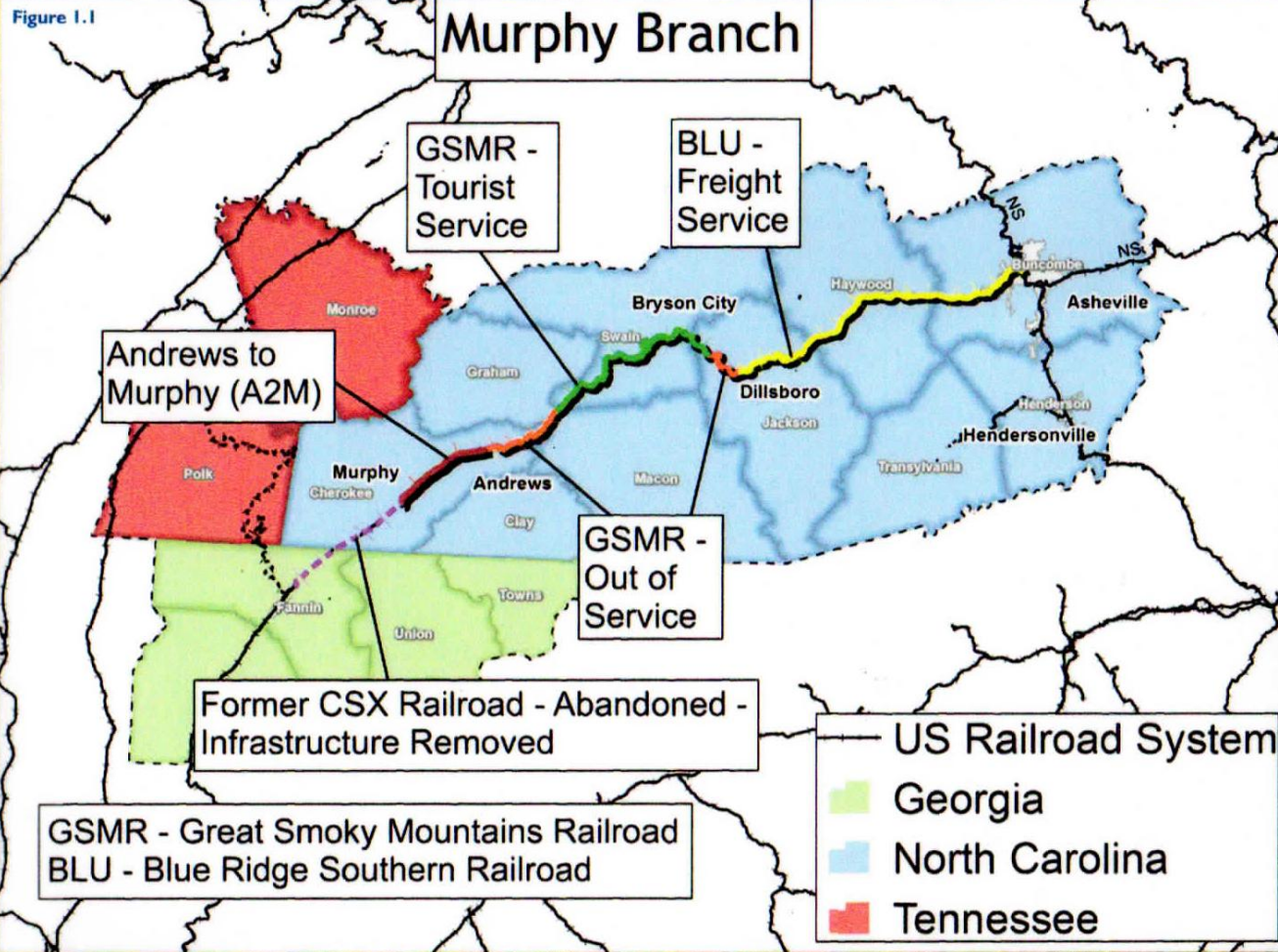
- 4th layout designed for operations. Never formally operated.
- Based in Tennessee Smoky Mountains with real locations.





Where??

- 5th layout. Designated layout area in basement.
- Started layout design in 2014. Room prep completed in 2016.
- Started heavily using Google search for history and reference information of the area.
- Found information on the Southern Railways' Murphy Branch:
 - Appalachia feels like Clinchfield.
 - Long history.
 - Laid back feel.
- Ding! Ding! Ding!



Where??

- 114 mile branch from Asheville to Murphy.
- Two railroads currently operating on portions of the line:
 - Blue Ridge Southern (Watco)
 - Great Smoky Mountains Railroad
- Chose Sylva to Murphy section with major compression so the model railroad could be a bridge line with an interchange.



When?

- Long history of railroads serving this region.
- Historically had a lot of interesting industries to model.
- I started building model railroads with a contemporary feel.
- I'm drawn to modern industries, buildings and vehicles.
- Modern allowed me to still be freelanced but with the prototype in mind; Proto-freelanced.



When?

- Canton (part of my east staging) had a huge paper mill until it closed in 2023 after 112 years.
- Many local industries that supported the mill have shut down since then.
- Keeping the layout proto-freelanced allows me to take artistic license with events, locations and timelines.



Currently, there are several industries in the region that I've borrowed and relocated

When?

- Jackson Paper (recycled paper mill) is operating in Sylva with limited rail service.



Nantahala Sand and Limestone operates on the branch with no current rail service.



When?

- Southern Aggregates has a ready-mix in Sylva that used to be rail served.
- It still is on my railroad. With rail service.



T&S Hardwoods provided wood chips for the Canton plant.



Business closed in 2024. It's been relocated to the Franklin Branch on my layout.

When?

- Shaw Flooring has a non rail served plant in Franklin.
- Rail service exists on the Franklin Southern.



Great Smoky Mountains Railroad in Bryson City.



This is the first scene you see walking into the layout room.

Essentially a LDE as is most of the layout.



When?

- Very popular tourist attraction for the region.
- Small town character with the railroad being a very heavy presence.



Fun to research, fun to model.





How?

- Room preparation
- Layout planning and design
- Layout construction

Layout Planning

- 3242615

The Southern Ry.'s Murphy Branch

Combining the best of two worlds: branchline charm and mainline motive power

BY G. WARREN REED
PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

MOST of us realize how futile it would be to try to model a great system like the Santa Fe, Conrail, or Southern in its entirety. It just can't be done. To choose some small part of the system, however, is a different problem.

Tellico, for example, the Southern Ry. & Murphy Branch, a 111-mile trackage of rambunctious rivers, mudhens, earfields, and small towns between Asheville and Murphy, N.C. It's Class I railroading, fast with a shunting atmosphere. Short trains running with multiple units, still grubby, and outstanding Appalachian scenery—what more could the modeler ask? Perhaps a batch of easily modeled small industries? It offers those too!

THE BRYSON CITY MURPHY TURN

Every weekday morning a train departs Asheville, works the industries to Waynesville, and leaves cars for the Ryeoun City-Waynesville train to move further up the branch. The Asheville train then picks up

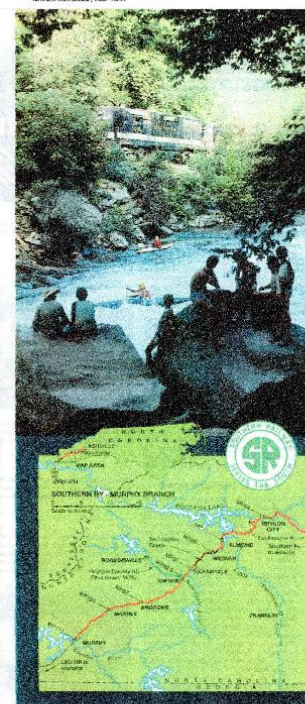
The Bryson City Wagonville turn pulls out of Bryson City between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. as the workmen along the way, picks up the cars left by the Asheville train, leaves off those bound for Asheville and returns to Bryson City. On its return, usually before 5:00 p.m., another crew takes the same locomotive to Murphy with the third train. They usually get back around midnight. In this article I'm focusing on just the 46-mile Bryson City to Murphy section.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Bryson City/Murphy section was finished in 1888 and was built to haul timber out of the isolated region. Other products included sacks of dried berries, coupe of thickets, oysters, and blood root and other medicinal roots and herbs.

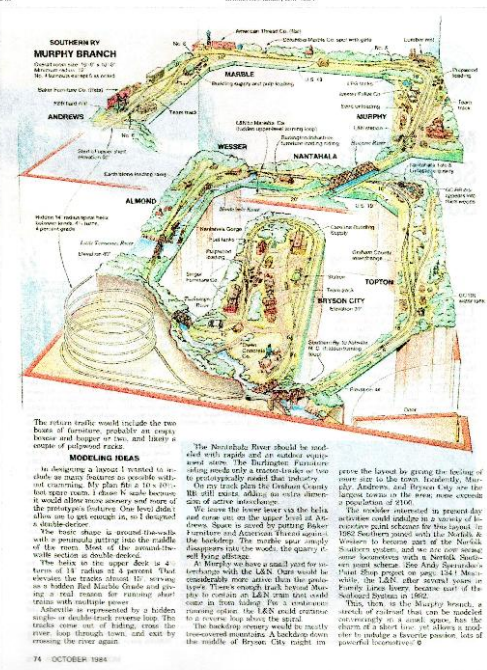
OCTOBER 1984

Model Examiner, Oct. 1984



3242016

Model Released, Oct. 1994



The return traffic would include the two boxes of furniture, probably an easy chair and bureau or two, and likely a

MODELING IDEAS

The basic shape is around the walls with peninsulas putting into the middle of the room. The second double-wall section is double decked.

The betix in the upper deck is 40 turns of 14 radius at 4 percent. That elevates the tracks almost 150, serving as a hidden Red Marble Grade and giving a real reason for running steep.

Asheville is represented by a hidden single- or double-track reverse loop. The tracks come out of hiding, cross the river, loop through town, and exit by crossing the river again.

On the track plan the Graham County still exists, adding an extra dimension of active intolerance.

A: Merely we have a small yard for *Amphispiza bilineata* with the L&N. Ours would be considerably more active than the population. There's enough track beyond to play to contain an L&N train that is *Amphispiza bilineata*. (P)

The backdrop scenery would be metatree-covered mountains. A backdrop in the middle of Bryson City might

pete the layout by giving the feeling of court size to the town. Incidentally, Murphy, Andrews, and Bryson City are the largest towns in the area; none exceeds a population of 2100.

The modeler interested in present-day activities could include in a variety of recreative point schemes the true layout. In 1982 Southern joined with the Norfolk & Western to become part of the Norfolk Southern system, and we are now seeing some locomotives with a Norfolk Southern point scheme. See Andy Spierdijk's Point Shop project on page 134! Meanwhile, the L&N after several years in Family Line's ivory because part of the Norfolk System in 1982.

This, then, is the Murphy branch, a stretch of railroad that can be modeled convincingly as a small, spare, has the charm of a short line, yet allows a modeler to indulge a favorite passion, lots of powerful locomotives! ©

74 OCTOBER 1984

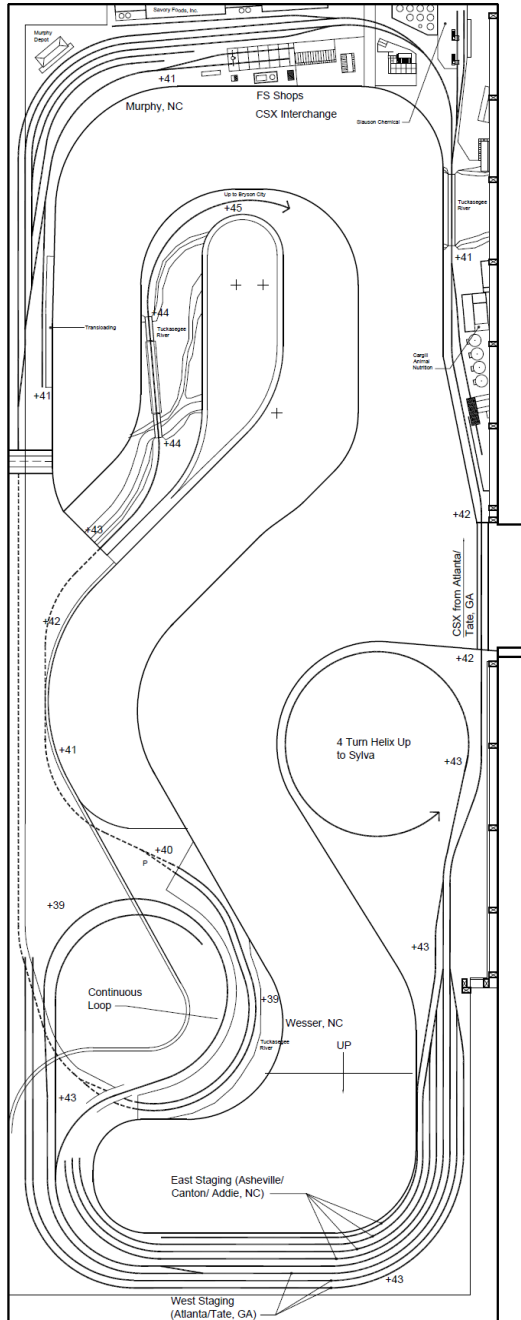
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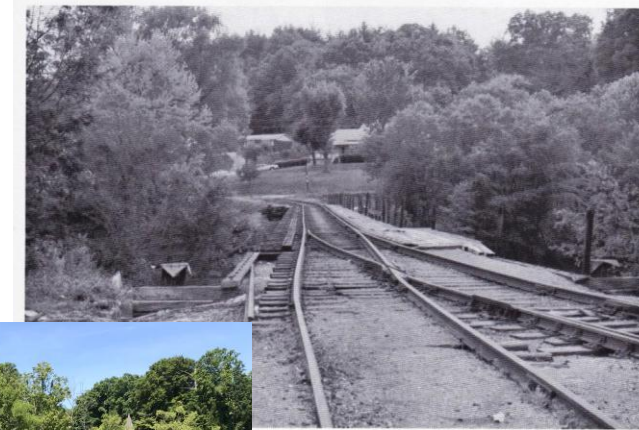
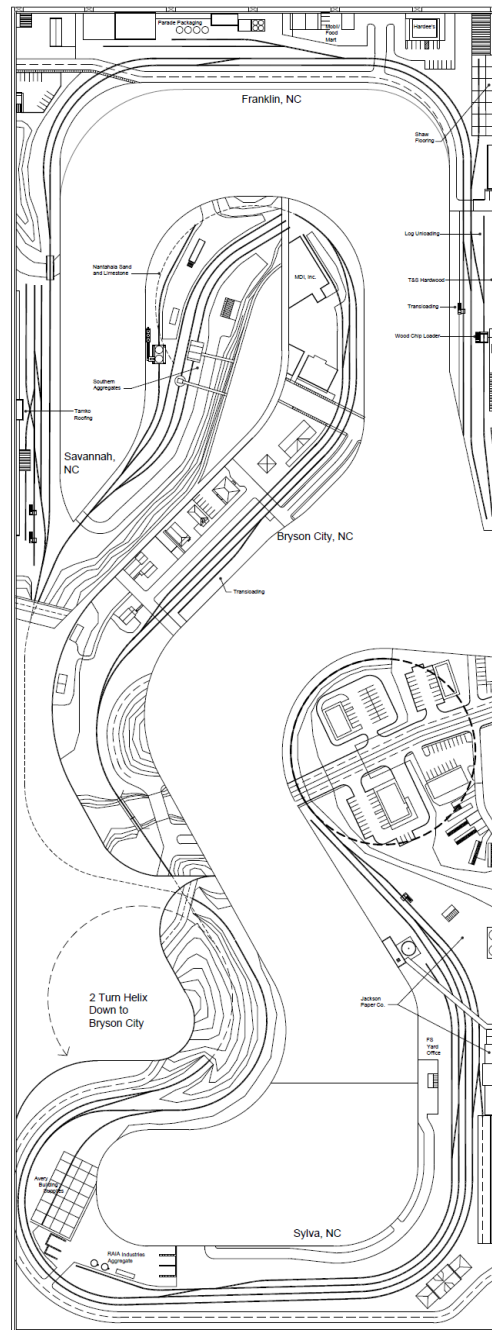
Layout Planning

- Decided to model Sylva to Murphy with major compression.
- Had to eliminate big chunks of the line to achieve a bridge line with an interchange.
- Originally wanted a branch line for a coal mine and other industries.

FRANKLIN
SOUTHERN
LEVEL 1



FRANKLIN
SOUTHERN
LEVEL 2

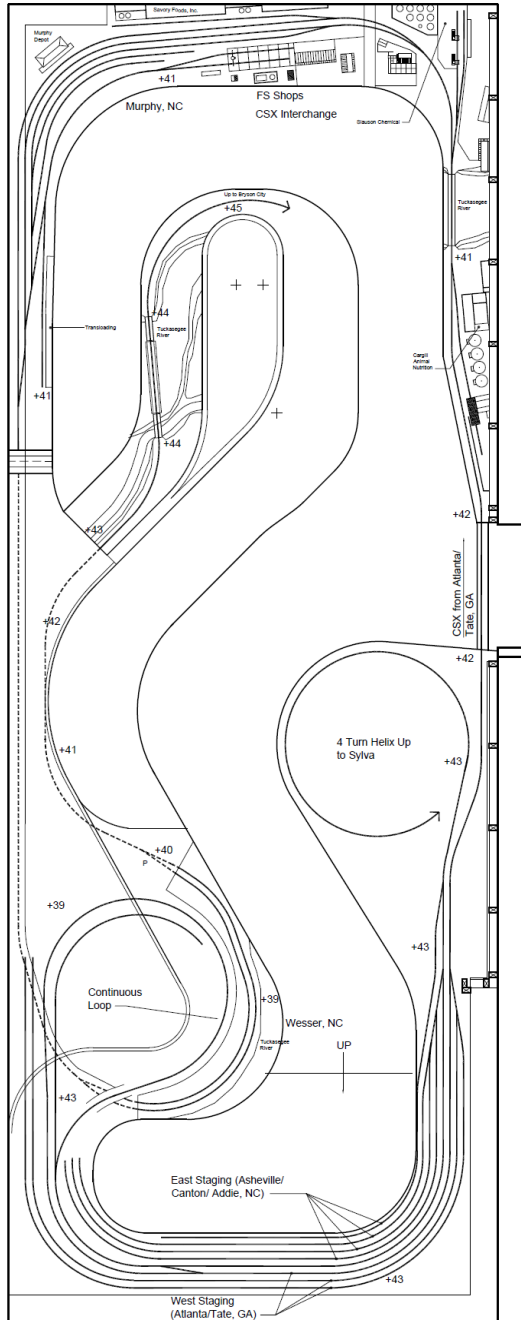


Layout Planning

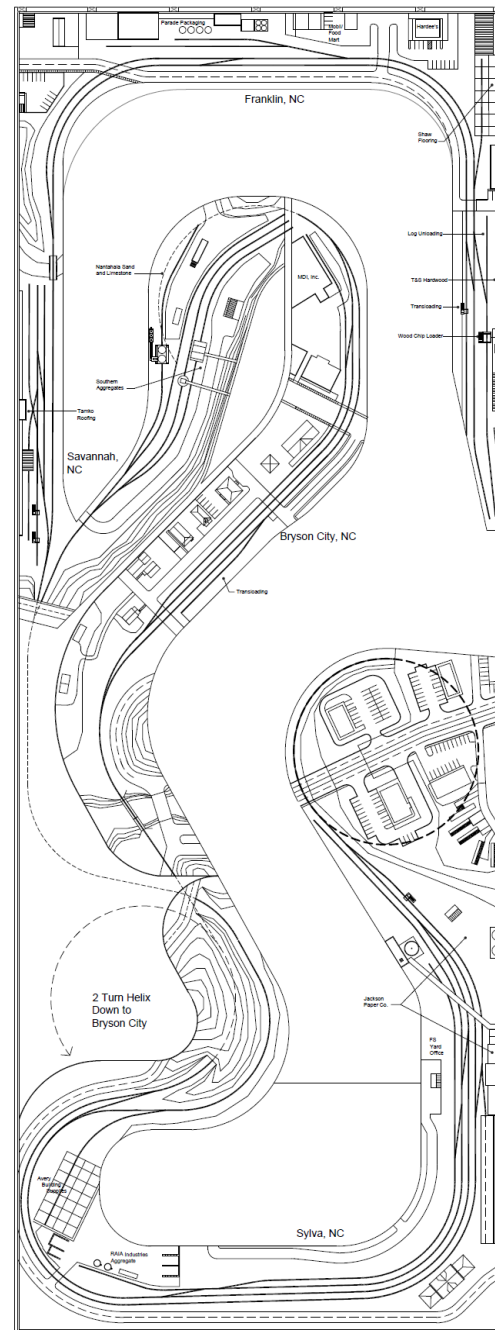
- 12'x32' room available.
- Reduced to 11'-4" width on the lower part of the walls due to previous crawl space expansion to a full basement.
- Wanted space between modeled towns.
- Opted for multiple decks, helixes and hidden track to achieve distance.



FRANKLIN
SOUTHERN
LEVEL 1



FRANKLIN
SOUTHERN
LEVEL 2



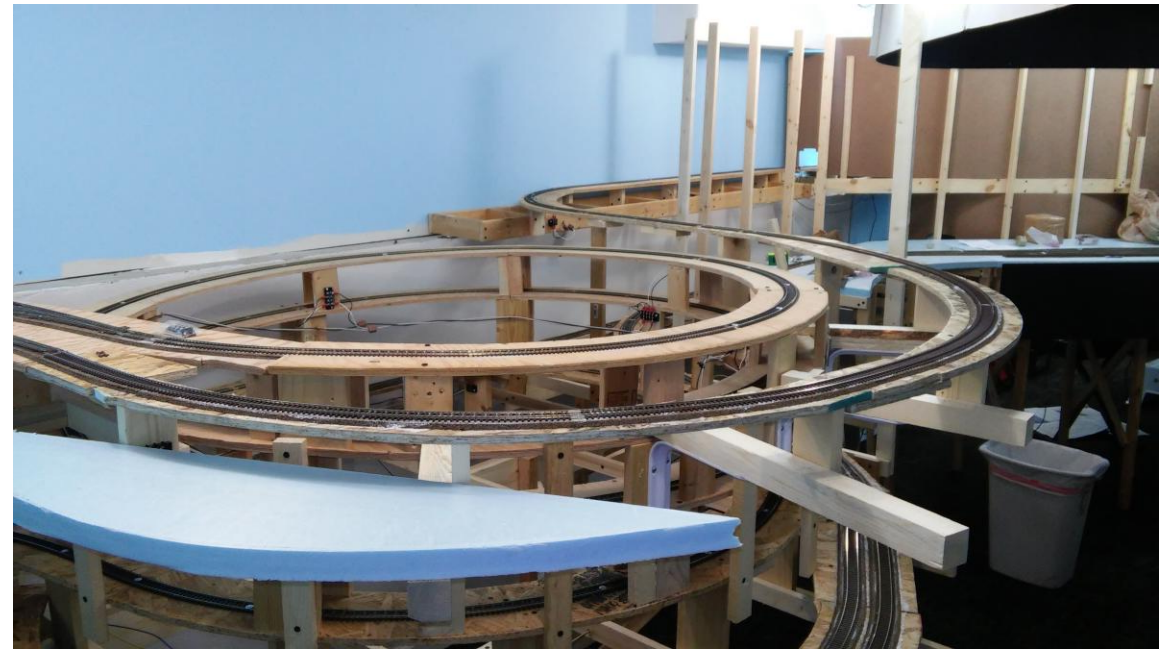
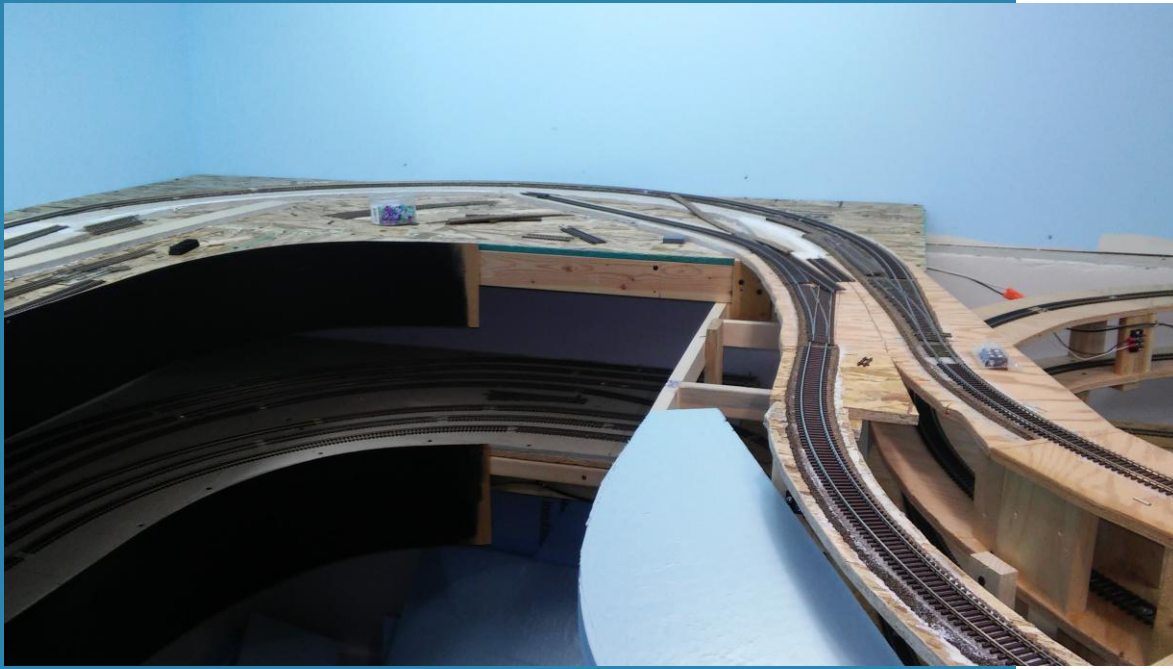
Room Preparation

- Wanted a clean, comfortable, quiet and inviting environment to work on and operate the layout.
- Spent several months finishing walls, hiding pipes, adding drop ceilings and valances.



Layout Construction

- Techniques included L-girder and open grid framing.
- OSB sheathing, plywood and foam sub roadbed.
- Cork and Homasote roadbed.





Layout Construction

- Designed the entire layout in AutoCad, including the creating framing plans for construction.
- Laid out helix pieces in AutoCad to maximize lumber usage. Printed large format sheets as templates.





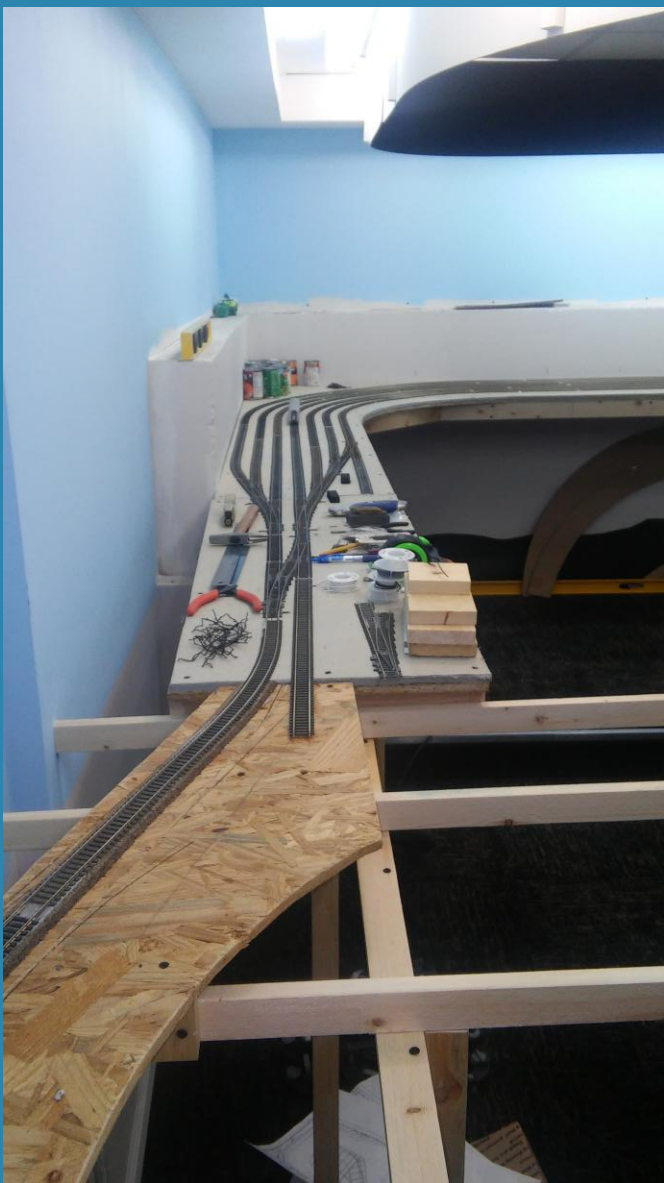
Layout Construction

- Huge help in working through complicated framing; setting grades and getting the correct helix configuration.



Layout Construction

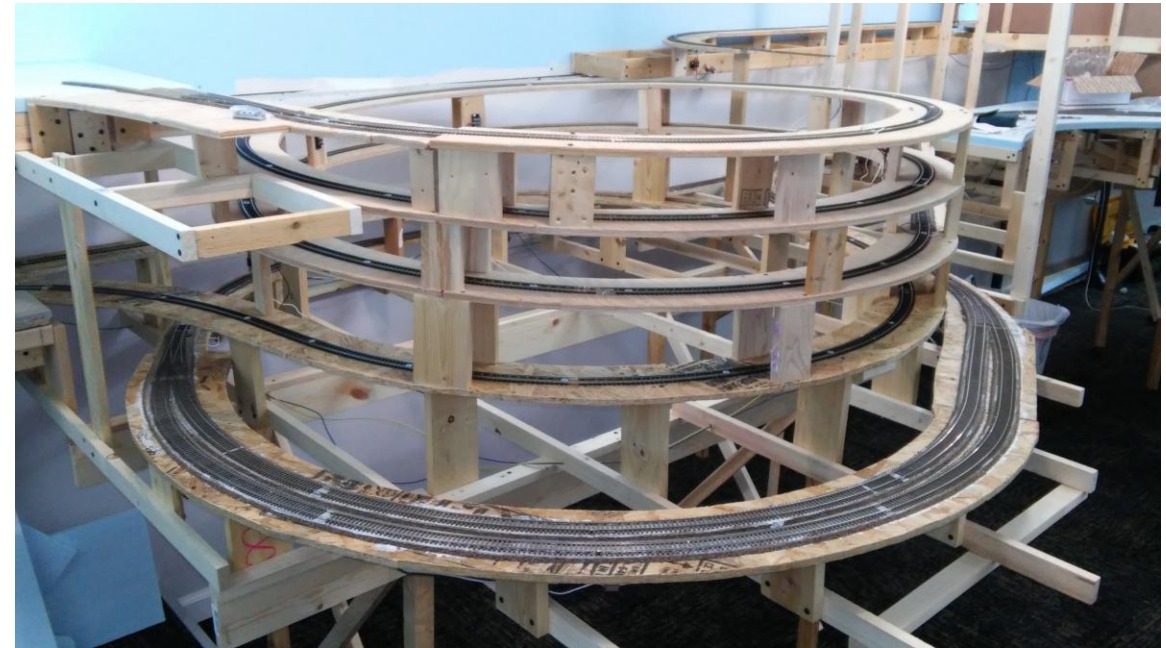
- Ended up using only one intact module from previous layout.
- Broke down the rest of the layout and reused the framing with very little waste.





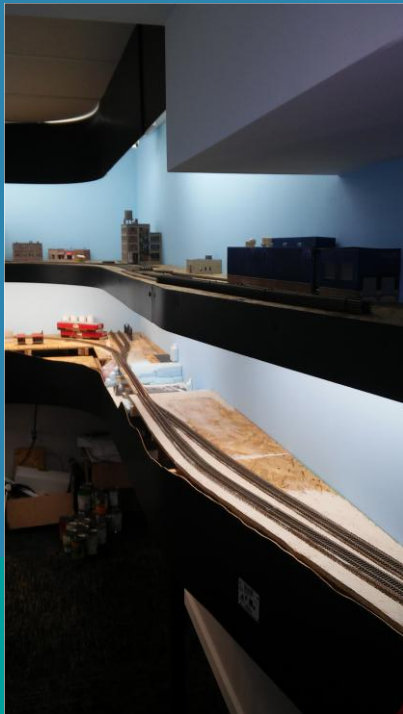
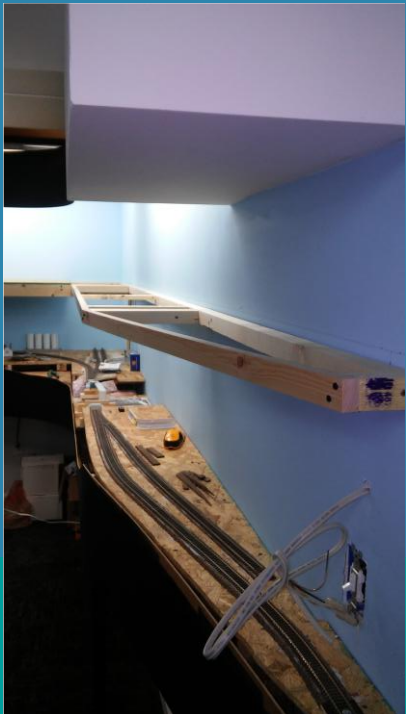
Layout Construction

- Two helixes; one two-turn and one four-turn.
- A reverse loop for staging and continuous running.
- Deck heights ranging from 34" to 59" above floor.
- Backdrop framing for scenery and to hide track.



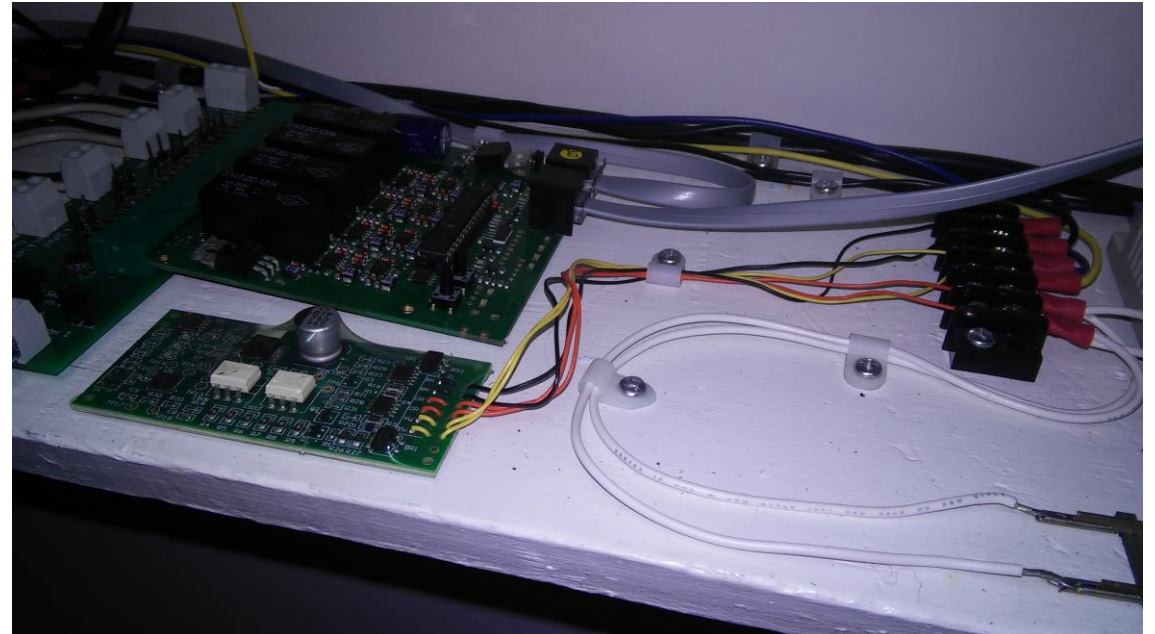
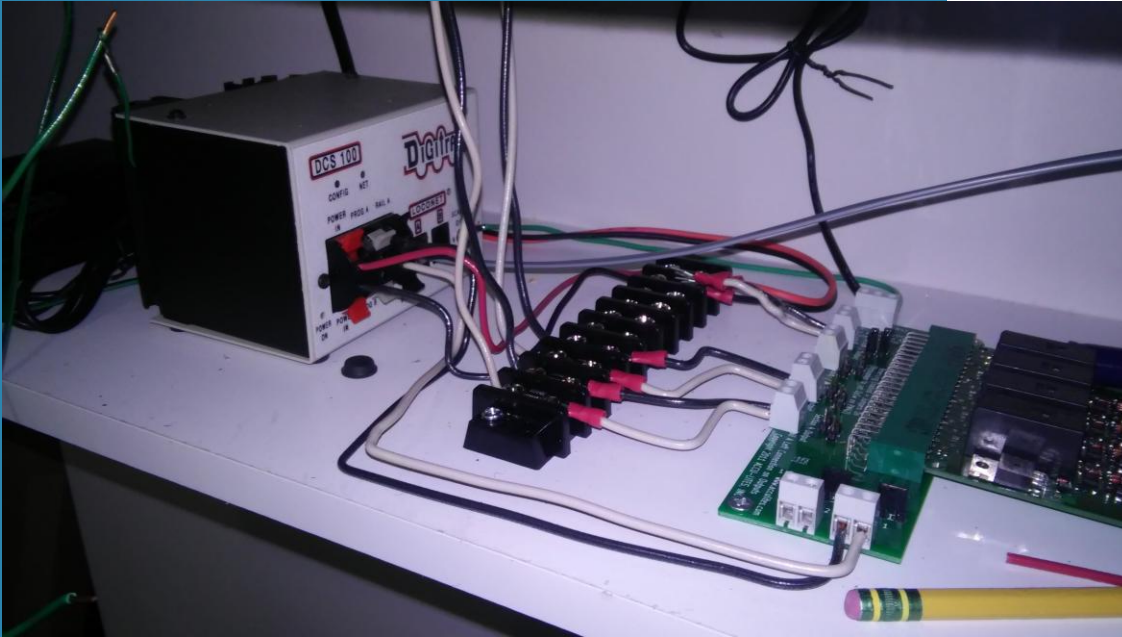
Layout Construction

- Deck spacing; 16-17" between decks.
- Lower deck 42-44" above floor. Upper deck at 59".
- Still need stool assistance for vertically-challenged operators.



Layout Construction

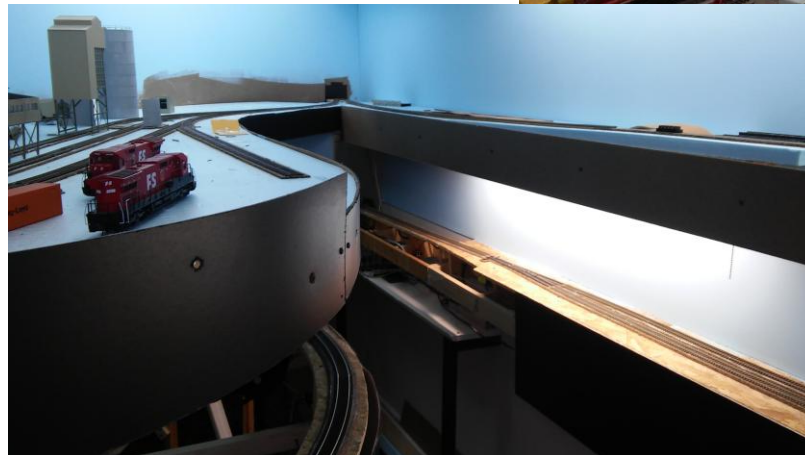
- DCC planning and design: As important as framing.
- Originally had one command station and one booster; added a booster after about 20 operating sessions.
- Remotely located boosters because of long bus runs.
- Added a second UR93 later and lifted the original UR92 into the valance.





Layout Construction

- Spent 10-30 hours/week for several years on the layout and associated projects.
- Important to me to have an operating layout that worked well, looked good and operated prototypically.



Layout Evolution

Upgrades:

- Added yard tracks at each end during Covid lockdown. Murphy shown here.



Layout Evolution

Upgrades:

- Added yard tracks at each end during Covid lockdown. Sylva shown here.



Layout Evolution

Upgrades:

- Changed coal mine to quarry for a more regional feeling.



Layout Evolution

Upgrades:

- Removed siding for a future coal tippie.
- Added large industry with it's own industrial switcher and interchange track (Tamko Roofing).



What's in Store?

- Make the operator's experience the best that I can.
- Tearing up existing scenery is painful!
- The result is worth it.



Final Thoughts



- Layout for me is a tool for hobby growth and social networking.
- Growth for me personally.
 - Clinic presenter.
 - Friendships developed from the hobby.



Thank You!