



Great Falls Model Railroad Club

Modeler's Forum October 23, 2025

Modeler's Forum convened at 7 PM on Thursday, October 23 with the following members present: Bob Willard, Jamie Robinson (taking notes and photos), Steve Doughty, Kent Waterson, Carmen Anastase, Dick Holman and John MacMullen. We were joined after a bit by Roger Plummer.

Bob kicked off the meeting with a presentation of trees. There had been a question raised at a previous meeting about whether or not static grass could be used effectively on a tree. Bob reviewed the basics of making a tree using folded florist's wire for a base, combing out hemp and inserting it into the wire armature, then twisting the armature with a battery-operated drill. Once in a three-dimensional shape, the hemp is trimmed to the rough shape and the tree skeleton painted. While wet, foliage is applied with the paint acting as an adhesive. The foliage could be ground foam or any other medium of the user's choice. When dry, Bob would spray the tree with hair spray, then apply static grass to it. Since the tree armature is wire, a static applicator has a perfect attachment point for the grounding lead. Bob's static grass applicator is homemade from an electric flyswatter and it produces a powerful electric charge! Once dry, the tree can be given any additional desired shading with spray paint or an airbrush. Subtle differences matter a great deal when creating realistic scenery!

Jamie showed two HO gondolas he had upgraded. He stated that he would sometimes pay as much as \$0.50 for "crappy" gondolas from train set manufacturers. He then upgrades the cars by converting the couplers to body-mounted Kadees, shaving off the cast-on grab irons and sill steps, replacing them with wire, and upgrading the wheels (and sometimes the trucks as well) to metal ones. The two cars displayed are lettered for M&J Salvage with decals created on an Alps printer. M&J Salvage is an off-line industry on the HO layout reached through the Pine Tree staging yard. The cars are weathered with a mix of airbrushed colors and brushed dry pigments.

Steve didn't bring a display this month, but is always an interested party and participant in the (many) discussions during the meetings.

Kent brought more 3d printed fencing for Carmen's suburban home project. He demonstrated the "[Sonic Saber](#)" from Phrozen – an ultrasonic hobby knife. It worked magnificently for cutting the myriad supports that festoon most 3d prints. Kent also noted that his Battleship diorama will be featured in the next issue (January/February 2026) of [Fine Scale Modeler](#) magazine. Kudos to Kent – that's quite an honor!

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Carmen is now working on trees for his suburban homes and showed a couple of packages of foliage. He also brought a package of pins with large round heads. He has used these to represent outdoor lights on houses. The package he brought was too large for HO houses, so he gave it to Steve for O gauge use.

Dick Holman brought his Free-mo corner module that he used at the Cumberland Fair. [Free-mo](#) is a modular specification that is far less rigid (as far as shape) than other modular specs. Dick's corner is about a 45° turn in the track. It is foam on a plywood base. Dick has done an excellent job with the scenery. Dick says that even though there are 4 deer, 3 coyotes, a bear, a moose, a hiker and a hunter, 42 tree stumps, and over 100 trees, it is nowhere near complete! Dick's trees are a combination of pre-built, kits and homemade. There is a lot of variety in height, species and color. Dick said that at least 100 more trees are needed for realism, not to mention fallen and freshly-cut trees... One can only hope that a host of HO beavers don't descend into the scene!

John MacMullen brought several sprigs of Sedum which he uses as trees. These can be used as-is, painted, with foliage added, or even reduced to bare skeletons. This is a very low-cost method of populating your layout with foliage.

Roger listened to the discussions and contributed some advice.

Modeler's Forum formal stuff:

- The deadline for entries for the Square Footer contest is 9 AM on Saturday, November 22. The square footers will be in display for all five days of ExTRAINaganza, with ballots being counted at the close of the final day. Remember that there are three entry classes this year: Novice, Intermediate and Master. The rules are [HERE](#) on our website.
- There will **not** be a November meeting of the Modeler's Forum.
- The next scheduled meeting will be a 7 PM on Thursday, December 18. Note that this is the third Thursday (to accommodate the Holidays).

Please come and join us on Thursday, December 18. Bring that new idea, new project or early Christmas present. We'll be glad to see you!

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