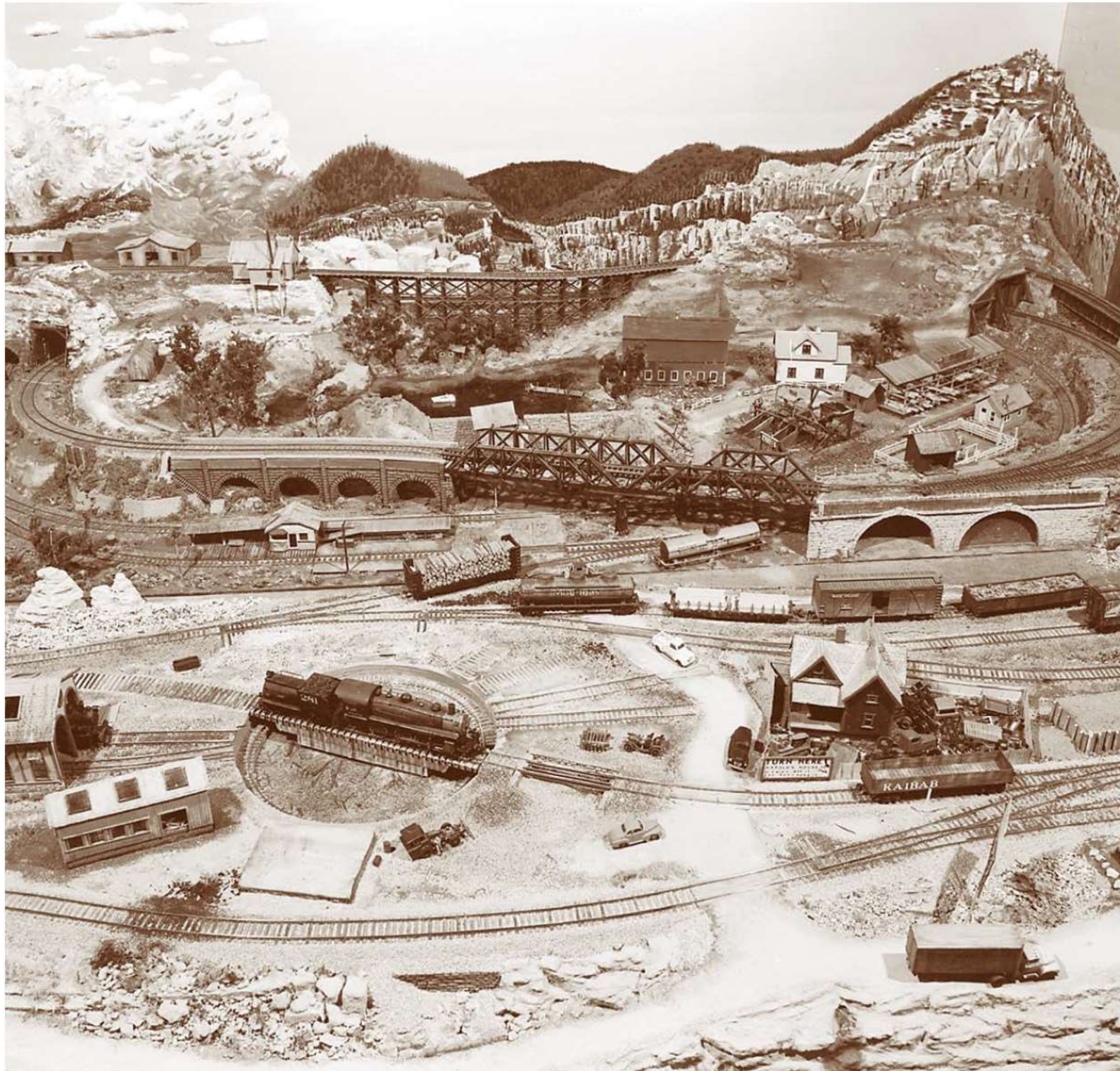


Building a tribute to the first Gorre & Daphetid

John Allen's original layout design still has a lot to offer

By **Phil Anderson**//Photos by Michael Quinn



In the 1980s my family and I moved into a rental house in Phoenix, Ariz., with space for only a modest-size model railroad. I'd just read *Model Railroad* with John Allen [Kalmbach Publishing Co., out of print – Ed.], which had a chapter on John's first layout. The original Gorre & Daphetid measured only 3'-7" x 6'-8", and I had room for that. Surely I'd learn something by building my own version of this famous HO layout.

I transferred the track plan on page 47 of that book [also shown on page 42 of this issue – Ed.] to a sheet of 3/4" plywood, trimmed to fit. I then cut out the roadbed cookie-cutter fashion and supported it to match the elevations shown in the drawing. Taylor Lake was cut out according to the drawing, and I glued and screwed a scrap piece of plywood to the bottom from the underside. Then the real challenges began.

A learning experience

What makes John Allen's first Gorre & Daphetid unusually interesting for a small layout are all the twists and turns of the right-of-way. In addition, bridge spans are offset so the tracks pass underneath at an angle. If that isn't enough, the left stone viaduct has a slight curve built into it for the approach to the straining-beam truss bridge.

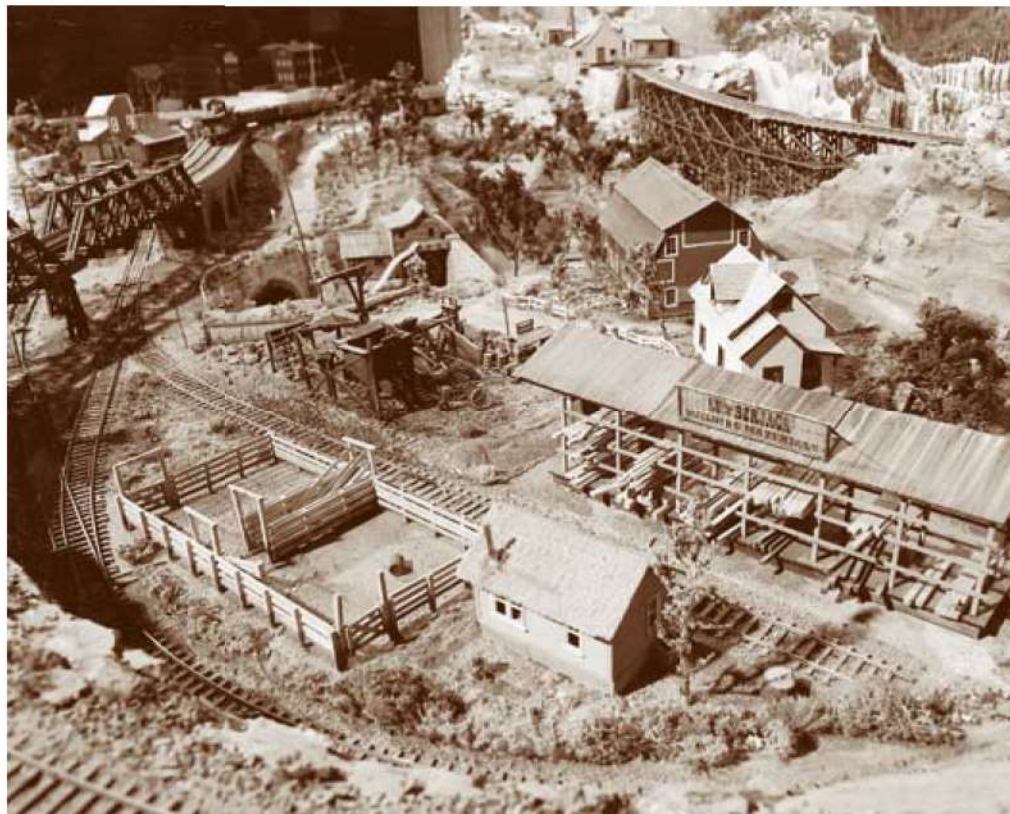
This layout has other subtle features that one doesn't discern until trying to replicate it. Initially I cursed John for making my task harder than expected, but I later thanked him for teaching me discipline and patience.

The project had a profound effect on how I currently approach layout design. It taught me that any scene, no matter how good, becomes quickly boring if everything is parallel. I avoid having tracks and streets that run parallel to the layout edges. Where I can't avoid having track aligned with the edge of the benchwork, I place streets and industries at an angle. If the track and benchwork are straight and close to each other, I have the fascia wander in and out in a curvy fashion to break up those parallel lines.

A few modifications

I raised the elevation of the dead-end spurs at Daphetid that are directly over the tunnel portals on the left side by 1/2". I made up the elevation difference by building a grade into the tall curved wood trestle.

Although he made some modifications, Phil Anderson's version of the Gorre & Daphetid at left bears a striking resemblance to John Allen's original HO scale layout.



There was room for a complete farm scene and other structures in the center of Phil's layout. Campbell Scale Model's stock pens are at left, Woodland Scenics' Otis Coal Co. is at center. Phil scratchbuilt the lumberyard.



Phil scratchbuilt this model of John Allen's famous enginehouse (later made even more famous by a Fine Scale Miniatures kit).

I handlaid the track using code 70 rail on wood ties and installed custom-built turnouts to fit each location. Kemtron twin-coil machines mounted under the benchwork operate the points.

I built the scenery base out of Styrofoam insulation board, a material not

available in John's day. I then applied several coats of plaster to hide the foam's texture.

Scenery variations

My methods for coloring scenery came from modifying techniques found



Phil took this photo of his gristmill at Taylor Lake. He scratchbuilt the structure using boards cut from weathered veneer.

in *Scenery for Model Railroads* by Bill McClanahan [Kalmbach Publishing Co., out of print – *Ed.*]. First, I brushed the plaster-covered foam with a mixture of white glue and water, and then brushed on a dash of pigment that I'd mixed with white acrylic paint. This helped lighten the colors.

When John built his first G-D Line, he had to dye sawdust to simulate grass. I applied the now-commonly available ground-foam turf. On the hillside I also used pieces of jute twine. I then added various shades of green turf to the tips to represent sagebrush.

I'd found some real sagebrush to use for tree armatures but didn't know how to make foliage back then. Lucky for me, Western scenes are mostly sand and rock. I used real rock, sand, and other natural materials for my ground cover and ballast. For example, the limestone ballast on my layout came from a government quarry at Grand Canyon National Park. I sifted the limestone to get scale-sized material.

During the first train show where I displayed my layout, many modelers asked me where I got my scenery products. After two days of these comments and questions, I came up with the concept of my current scenery products business, Arizona Rock & Mineral Co. That was 17 years ago; I'm now somewhat retired.

Structures and operation

The only structures I copied exactly from the original G-D Line are the depot at Gorre, the two-stall enginehouse, the bunkhouse, and the gristmill. I scratchbuilt all these structures. The siding for the gristmill is weathered veneer that I cut into individual boards.

I also used several Campbell Scale Models kits, as they tied in nicely with the Allen-inspired structures, and managed to fit a farm scene near the lake.

I once read that John placed sharp needles in his scenery so folks wouldn't touch it. I found out the hard way where those "needles" must have been: the

straining-beam truss bridge. I built my own version of this structure, which required about 50 pieces of steel music wire for the tension rods that kept the top and bottom chords from spreading apart. When working on the layout, I poked my finger on one of them, and it sure felt like a needle!

At train shows, folks viewing my layout would watch the train pass around them on the lower level, disappear into a tunnel, reappear at the other portal, and run over the bridge and viaduct on the high track. Most of them couldn't figure out where the train changed levels. This is just another bit of whimsy John designed into the track plan.

Although John's first layout was conceived decades ago, it has many key elements that still make a rewarding model railroad today. **MRP**

Phil Anderson is the founder of Arizona Rock & Mineral and keeps trying to retire despite an ongoing demand for his products.