

Building Walthers' New 130 Ft. Turntable, Modern Roundhouse, and Add-on Kit

By Keith Lyons/photos by author



The new Walthers turntable and roundhouse will become a focal point of your model railroad. The 130 ft. turntable accommodates an NP challenger steam locomotive.

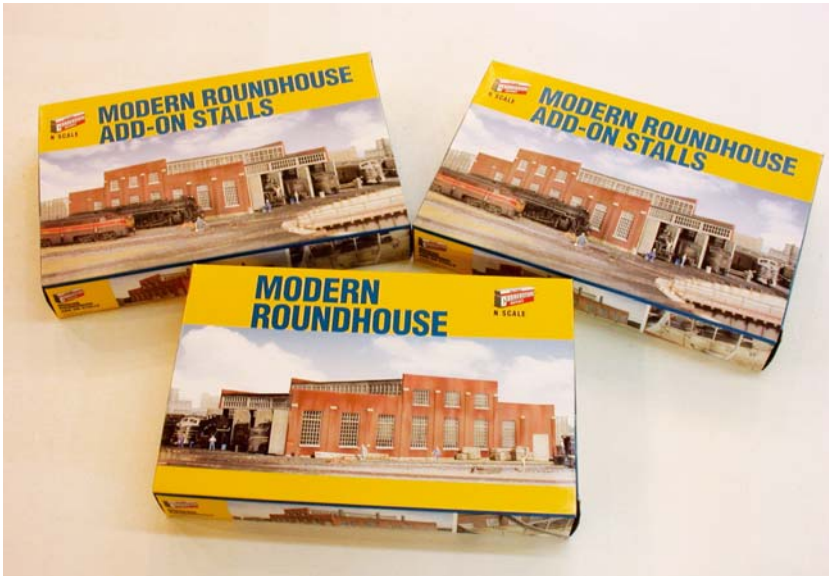


Ever since I had started building the Northern Pacific Tacoma Division in N scale I've lamented the fact that there hasn't been a good operating large turntable with North American feel available in N scale. Yes, there has been the old Heljan kit, also marketed through Con-Cor, Walthers, and others. There has also been one from Bowser based on an H0 unit, and some custom manufactured items, but they didn't have the look and operation I was after.

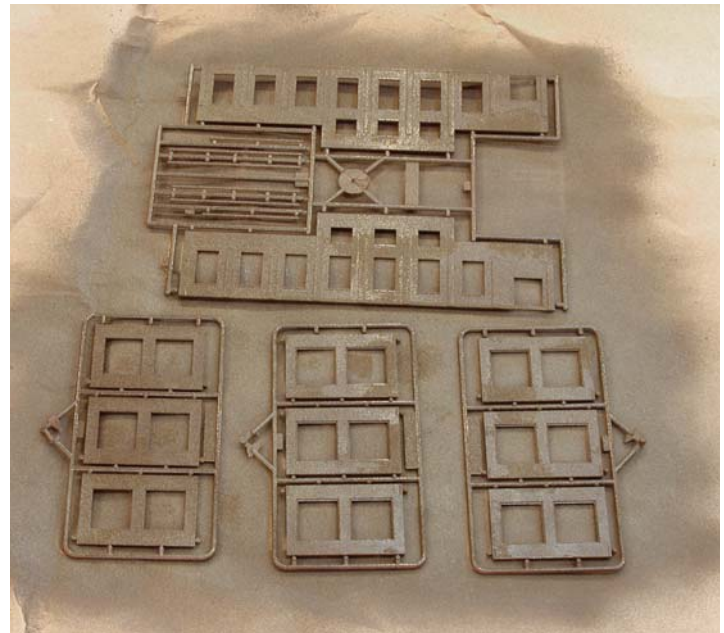
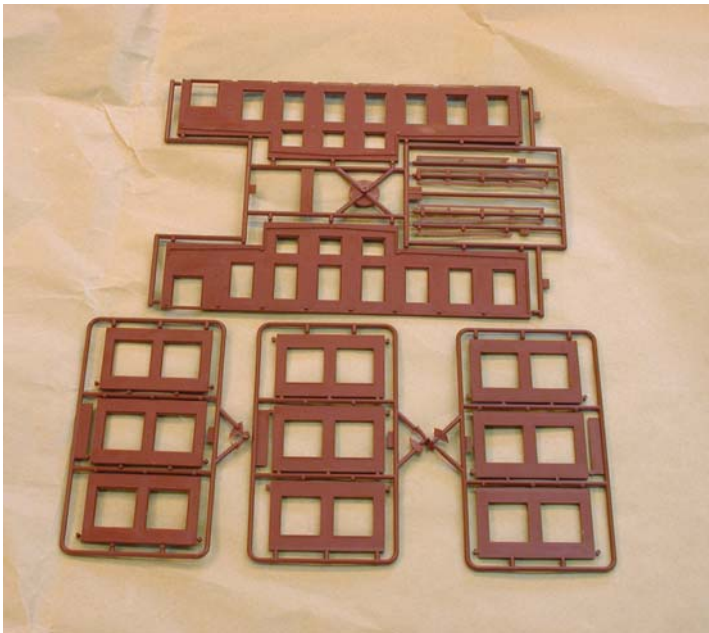
That has all changed in a big way with the release of the new Walthers 130 foot Operating Turntable and the Modern Roundhouse kits. They have the look I was after, or really close to it (meaning kit-bashable!), the operation, and, best of all, an af-

fordable price. Yes, I'm happy. I even decided to make it larger by purchasing another add-on kit (total of 4) to make 12 stalls instead of 9. The turntable comes with a controller that is very easy to program and works very well. It's smooth and quiet. Just keep the gear raceway clear of any debris for best operation.

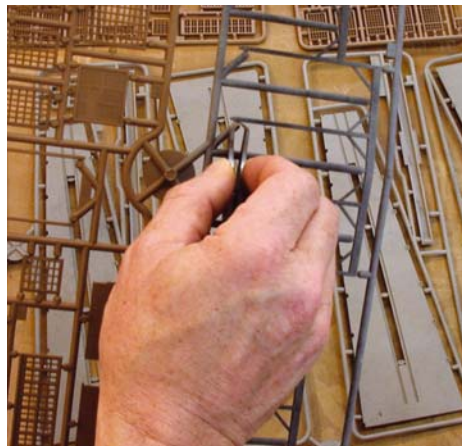
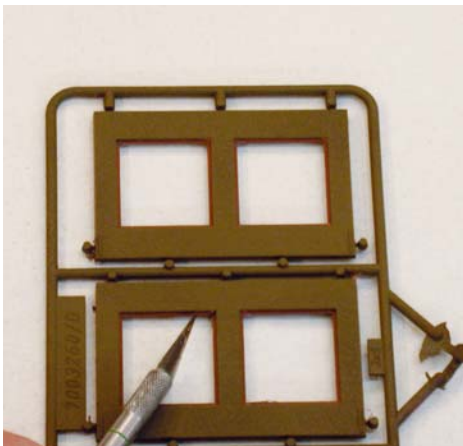
The Roundhouse kits are very cleanly molded and the initial test fit was great. I am never happy with the bare plastic color but if you don't like to paint then you could probably just weather the walls with pigments or chalks and have good results. I decided to paint all the pieces before assembly. I made some observations along the way, and had a few after-thoughts that I'll share in the captions.



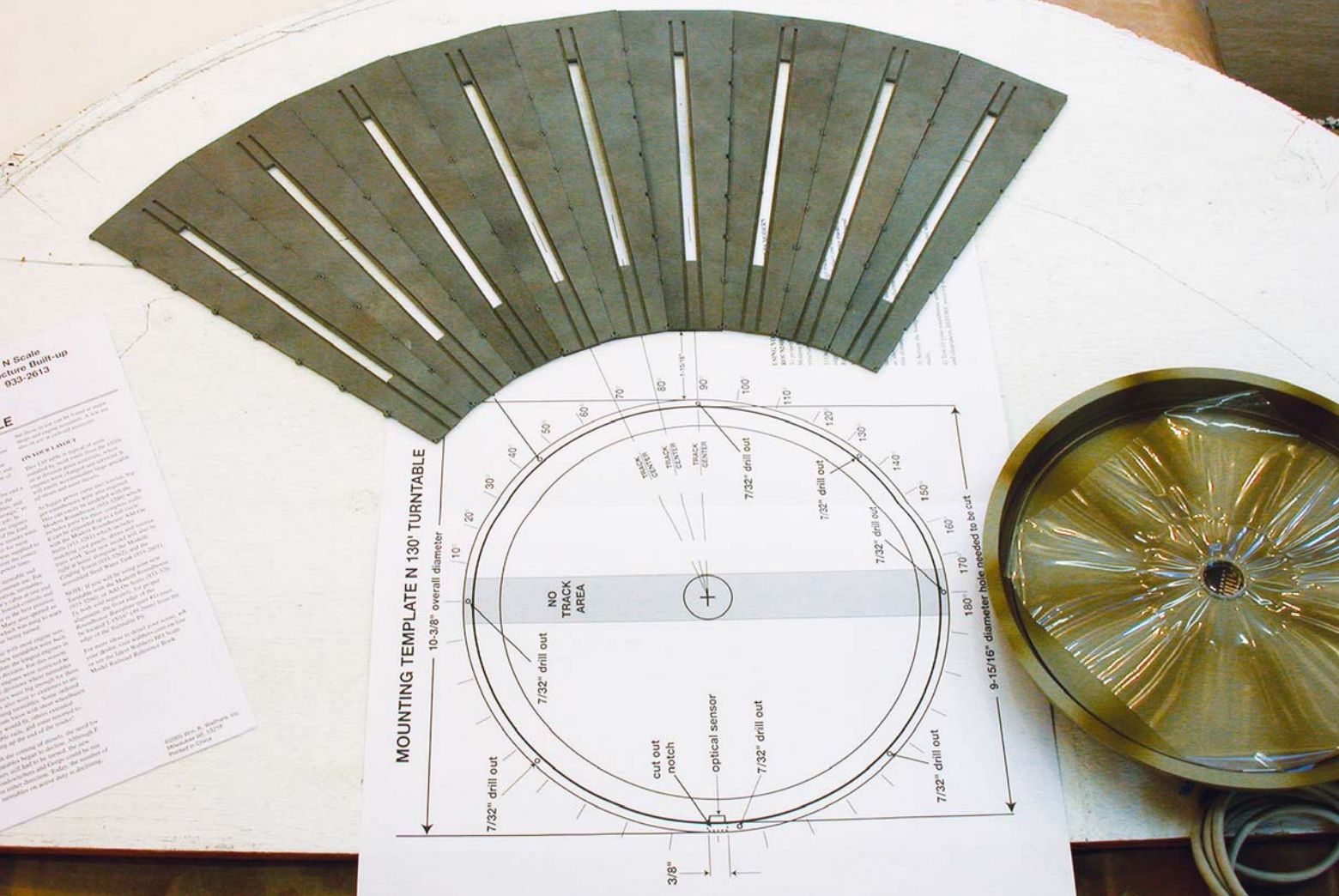
The roundhouse kits, contents, and directions are well organized and delivered nicely sealed in plastic bags.



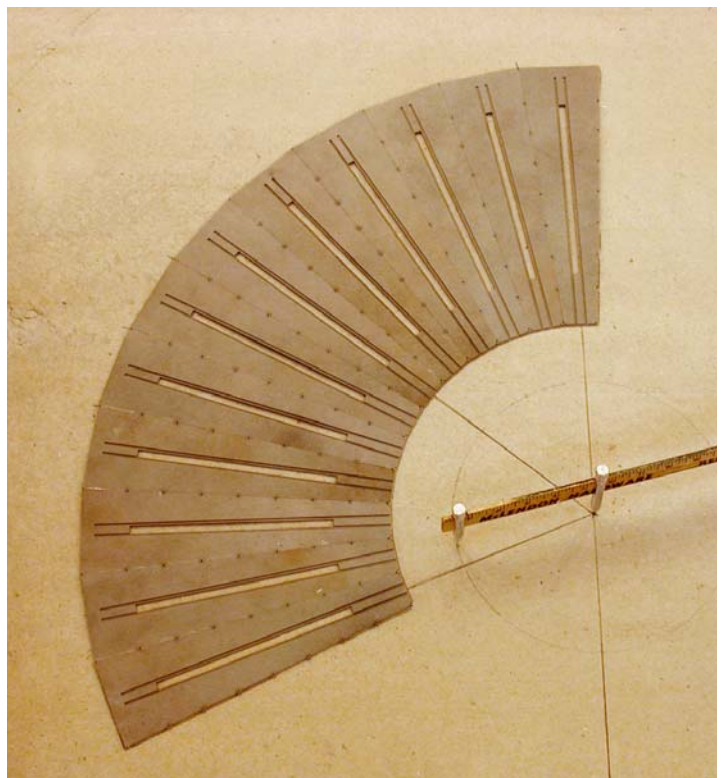
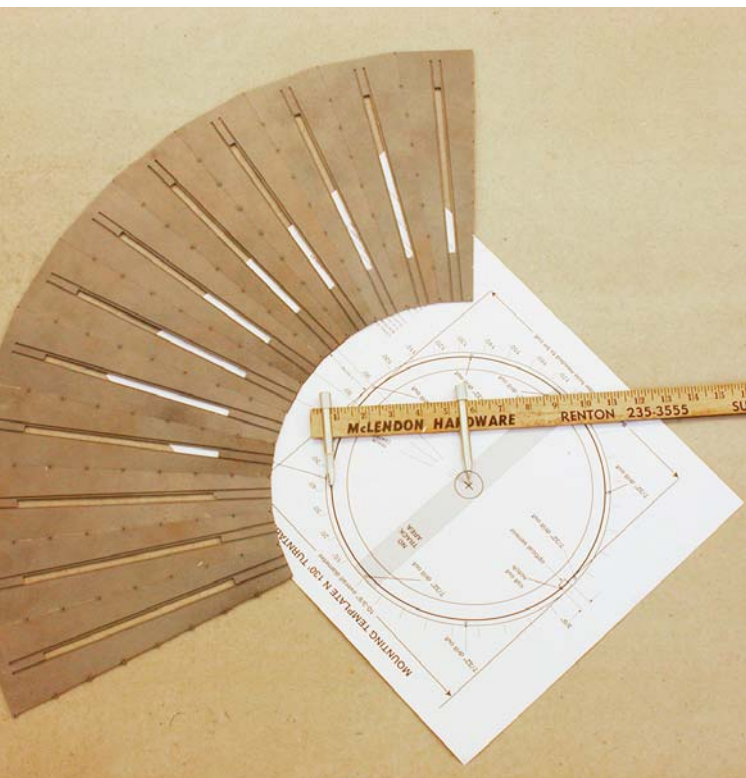
The walls are cast in a red brick with patterns on both sides. I chose to paint the walls a more earthy brown brick color, which seemed closer to the color of bricks used by Northern Pacific. This is optional, and you could simply apply some weathering to the base plastic color.

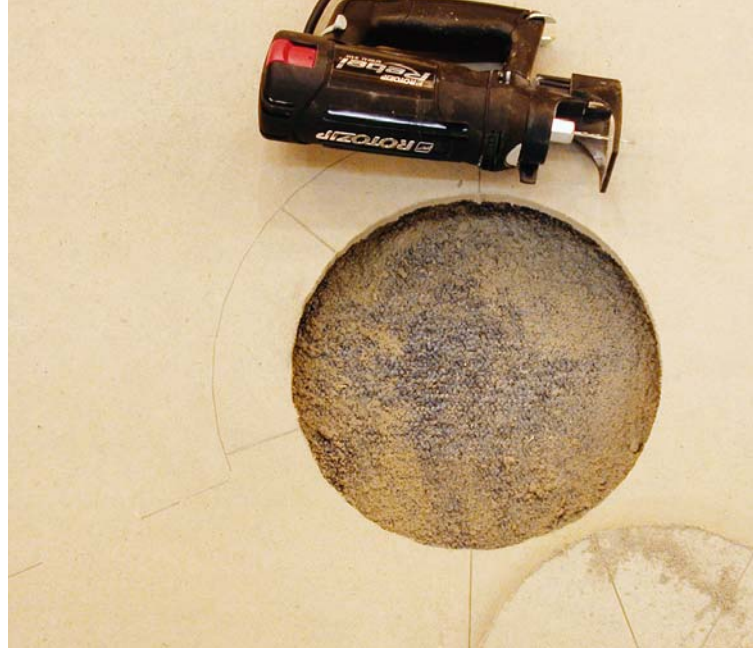
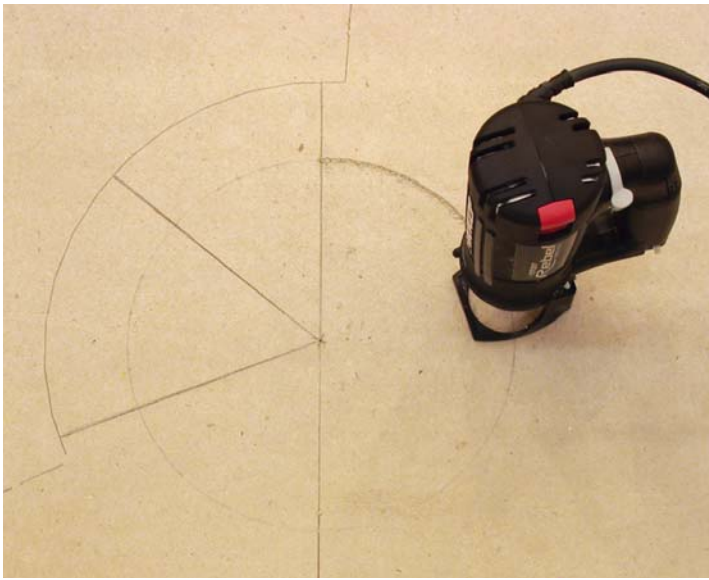


Remember to remove paint from areas where windows or other walls will be glued together (left). The middle and right views show me removing the parts at the gates with a sprue cutter. Flush cutting wire cutters, an X-acto knife, or single-edge razor blade may work as well, but I really like the sprue cutters because they do not put any unnecessary pressure on the plastic parts.

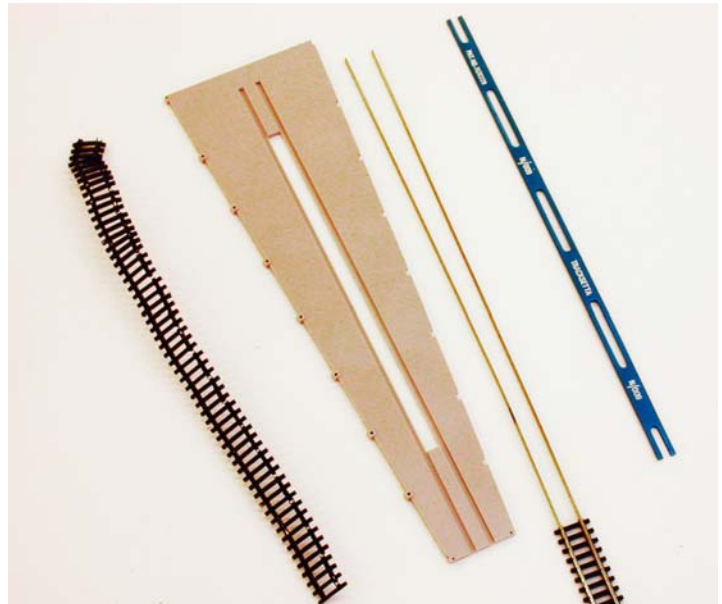
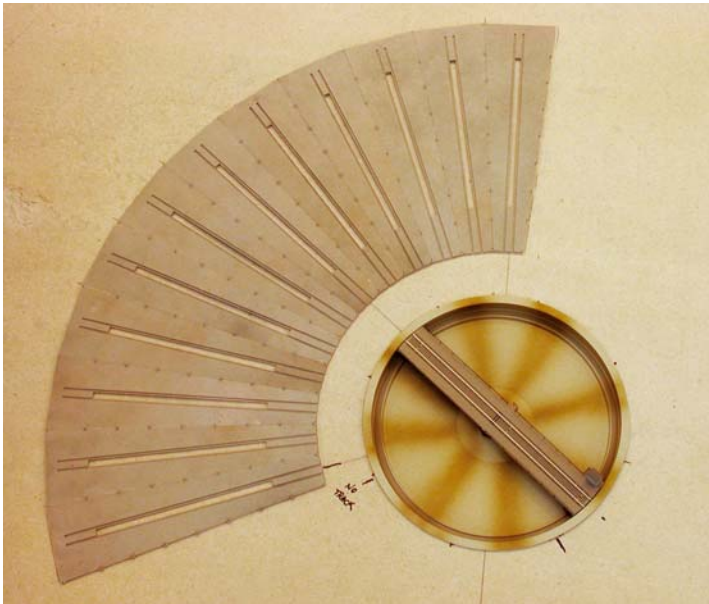


Above, I laid out the roundhouse foundation on the turntable template (included with the turntable) to get an idea of the overall size. I'm using Homasote as a base. Below, using the template, I adjusted my compass to help mark the hole. I found out later that the template circle was about 1/8" smaller than the written dimensions and I should have actually measured the opening before cutting. Use the written dimensions. (An updated template can be downloaded from: <http://www.walthers.com/exec/productinfo/933-2613>).





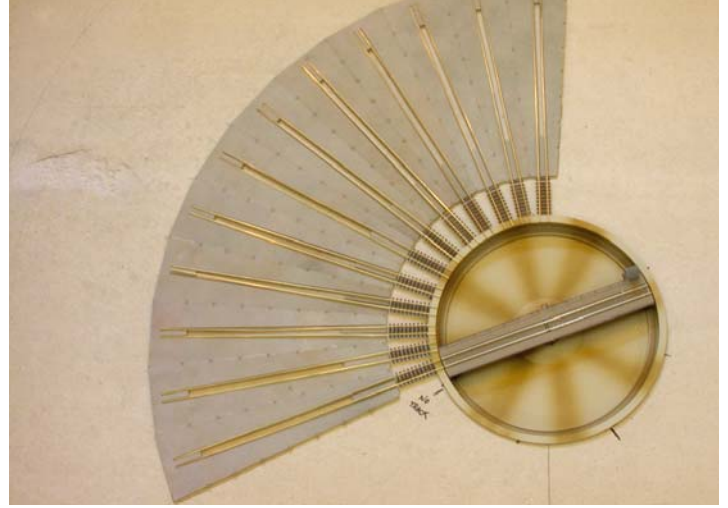
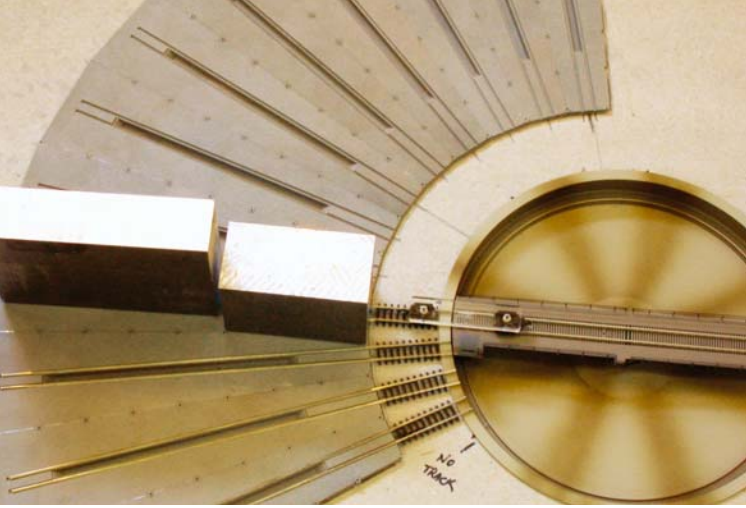
I used a Roto-Zip tool to cut the hole. Luckily, I was easily able to make the opening a little larger with my Roto-Zip. I was also able to cut the notches for the anchor posts under the turntable pit lip, as well as for the sensor.



Left, after enlarging the hole just a bit I test fit the turntable to plan the alignment of the rails to the roundhouse. Right, the turntable foundations have troughs on either side of the inspection pits for rails. They appear to be able to accept code 55 rail, but I decided to use Peco code 55 as it's really code 80 with a second bottom "plate" at the code 55 level. This will match the code 80 rail height on the turntable without having to add a shim under the rails on the lip of the turntable pit. I measured and cut the length of flex track needed and removed all the ties where the rails were to go into the foundation. I left ten ties in the space between the roundhouse and the turntable pit and had the rails come up to the edge of the pit.



I used an adhesive called Huen's Moveable Glue to bond the rails to the foundation and I like the way it came out. It's very similar to Woodland Scenics Accent Cement. ACC or Epoxy would work as well. Above, I used a Peco straight Tracksetta tool to align the rails and a weight on top of it while the glue sets.



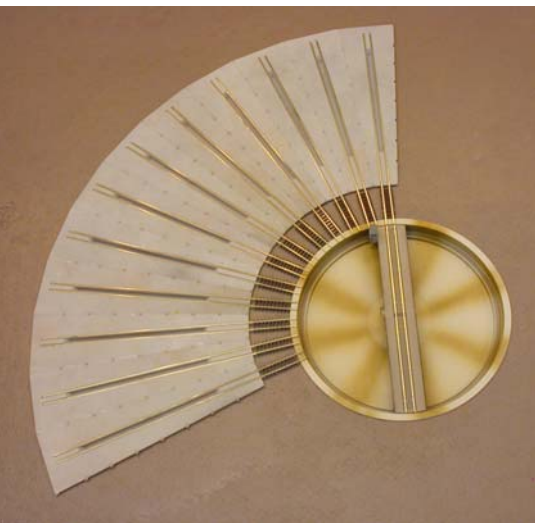
Left, weights hold the rails in place until the glue dries. Right, all roundhouse rails are in place and aligned with the turntable bridge to be straight. Some rails had to be gently filed for proper fit. I then marked the openings for the inspection pits. Unless you make the roof removable you may want to omit the pits and paint the area under them dark gray or black as they can't easily be seen from the open doors.



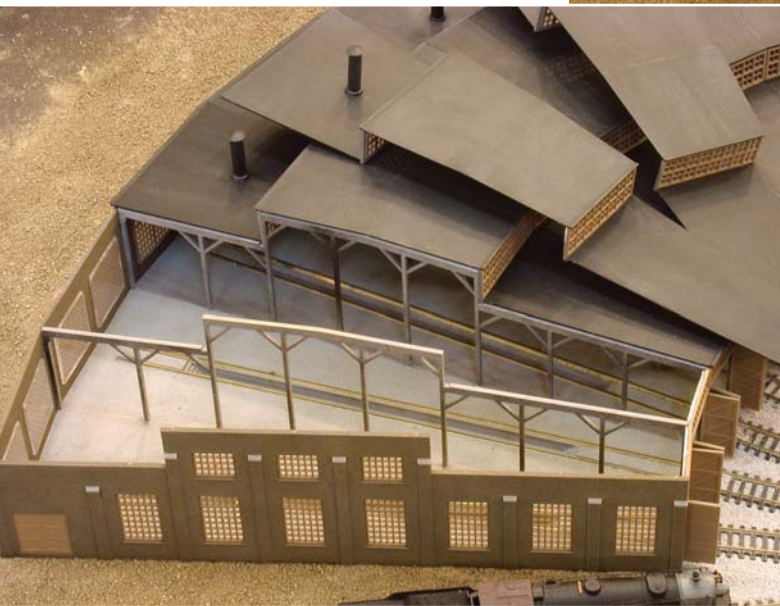
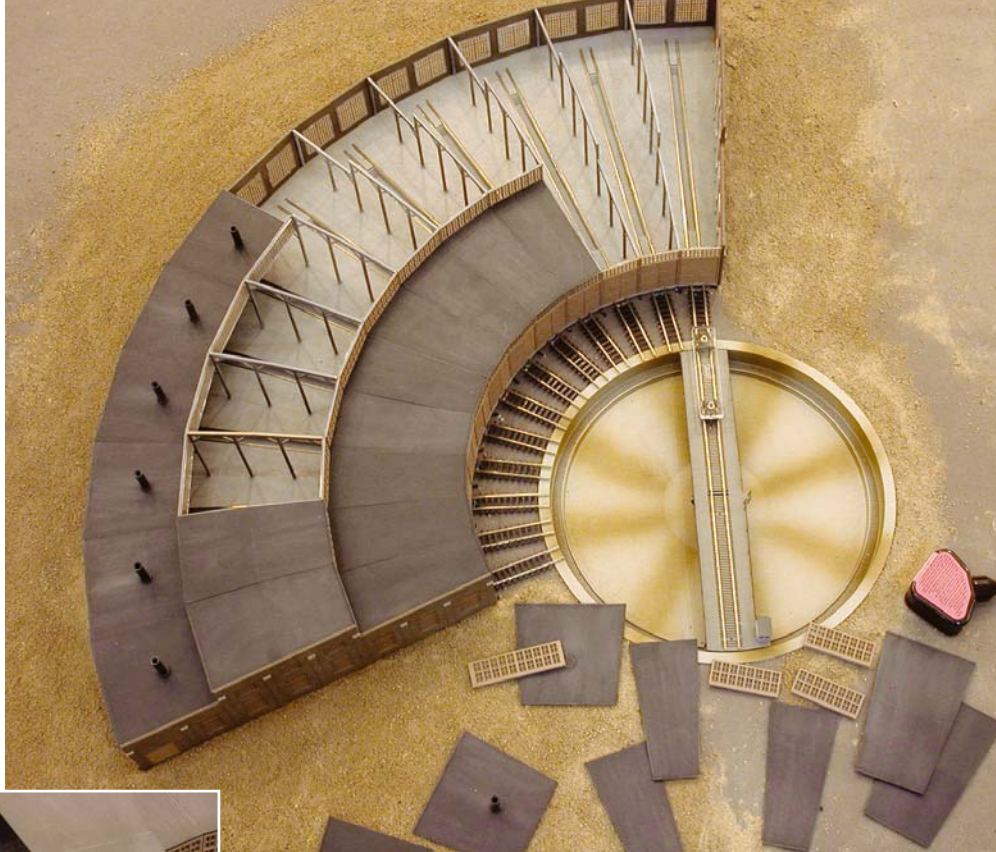
Left, since the pit lip is thicker than the foundation there is a slight difference in height that should be accounted for. I solved that by taking a few measurements and found that digging the clearance for the inspection pits could create the space I needed without needing a lot of shim stock. I set a router depth to about a tie thickness less than the depth of the pit that attaches under the foundation. I cut channels where I had marked through the inspection pit openings. At the right, I glued the inspection pits to the underside of the foundation and placed weights on them to be sure that they were fully home.



Left, power needs to be sent to the rails and I used the hidden wire method of attaching "downleads" to the bottoms of the rails. I placed them close to the foundation. I used alternating color pairs to help keep them separate as each will go to a separate momentary contact power switch. DCC users can run each pair to their bus lines. The turntable does not route power to those tracks. Right, I then drilled the holes for the roundhouse track wires.



Above, the roundhouse foundation with wired tracks and turntable in place. I had painted the Homasote with brown latex paint to help avoid it soaking up water and deforming when I add scenery materials later. Right, walls are up and some roof panels set in place.



Left, I wanted to be able to remove sections of the roof and Walthers made this easy to do. I simply placed the roof windows as instructed but did not glue them to the walls or trusses. I carefully glued the roof sections to the window frames and allowed them to fully cure. The roof-window panels then rest on the structure, which allows me access to the locomotives in the stalls and permits me to detail the inside of the roundhouse if I choose.



Yes, I did this almost on the floor (left). It's elevated by the width of a 2x4 to allow for the cutting of the hole without cutting the carpet. Note the gardening kneepad.



Once completed and installed, the Walthers turntable and roundhouse complex will add many hours of operating enjoyment and viewing pleasure to your layout. ▶