

Sparta Station Project – Part 3 - Interior

By Richard J. Smith

I find modeling interiors to be very fascinating and fun. Even as a 12 year old, I built the Campbell “Mathews Mercantile” and put in an interior. I even using some Scale Structures Ltd. cast parts. I couldn’t afford many of those back then so much of the interior was scratch built. That model is long gone but I saved the castings and believe it or not, a few of those SS Ltd. detail parts made it into Sparta Station! Yeah, I’m a pack rat. One thing about interiors, doing them is way more than twice the work ... and fun.

The Sparta Station HRM Laser Models kit came with basic interior walls true to the original blueprints. But I have no (zero) pictures of the actual interior. I do have some pictures of other Milwaukee Road stations so I used those as a guide to follow “prototype practice”. Several examples are shown in Figure 1 for the Milwaukee road along the La Crosse and River Division in Columbus, Portage, and New Lisbon, WI (from the Vern Brummel collection):



Figure 1. Columbus

Portage

New Lisbon

From Figure 1 we can glean a number of interesting elements that were subsequently included in Sparta Station:

1. Green! Walls of various shades of green, with chair rails, and two tones.
2. Beautiful long wooden benches.
3. Silver painted cast iron radiators.
4. Wall clocks.
5. Posted calendars.
6. Train bulletins.
7. Ash trays.
8. Vending machines.
9. Garbage bins.

I also had a copy of the blueprints which annotated various sections like smoking versus general waiting rooms, bench arrangements, men's/women's rooms, agents office, boiler room, coal room, baggage room, and express room. Figure 2 below shows the blueprint plan view with top-down photos of my model:

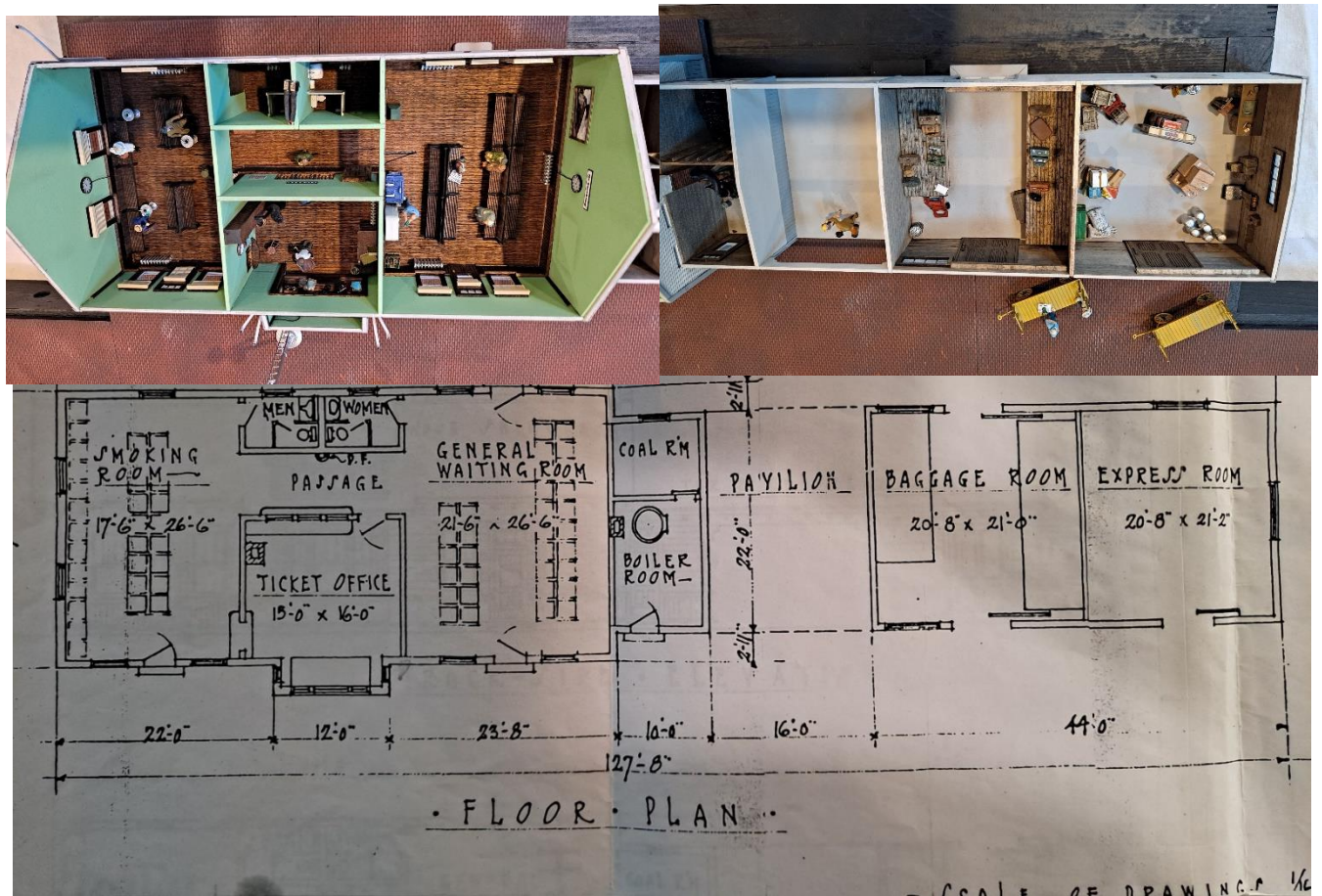


Figure 2.

I bought the drawing from John Dornfeld ("Depots by John") when I was originally planning to completely scratch build this model. Then I discovered the HRM kit. The prints still came in very handy even when starting from a kit.

Basic Construction Techniques

1. Interior wall sections of the station portion were spray painted standard "Milwaukee Road Station Green" (OK, a Rust-oleum satin "Pistachio" rattle can from Walmart), two coats with fine steel wood sanding between coats.
2. As in Part 2 (Exterior), all interior sections were finished as much as possible before final gluing together (see Figure 3).
3. Wainscoting was cut from Northeastern scale lumber sheets, stained, and then glued in place with Elmer's wood glue. I have no idea if the prototype actually used wainscoting, but I like the way it looks.
4. The station section wood floor was part of the HRM kit and was already scribed. I added the nail holes using a ponce wheel. Ponce wheels sometimes come in packs of 3 from local artist supply

shops. Experiment with a scrap piece of wood to find the right one. Mark your spacing with a scale ruler and go slow. Ponce wheels easily “wander” away from your straight edge.

5. All wainscotings, chair rails, base molding, interior doors, window frames, and benches were stained with Minwax Jacobean (thank you Master Model Railroader Bob Hamm for suggesting this stain to me years ago).
6. Interior wall sections of the baggage/REA/boiler room sections were scribed horizontally to represent wide boards, and stained with Hunter medium brown stain.



Figure 3.

To Steam Heat or not to Steam Heat

For some weird reason I really like cast iron radiators painted silver, whether modeled in a building, a plumbing supply store, or a junk pile! Since the blueprints in Figure 2 show a boiler room I know this building had these radiators. Since these small town stations were often built on slabs (including Sparta Station), I was confused about the term “boiler” on the blueprint, which could imply a steam heat system or hot water. But steam heat boilers need elevation difference to function (steam rises, condensate drains). After consulting with my train buddies and with the owner of HRM models, we concluded the heating system was likely forced hot water with a circulating pump ... probably a simple circuit around the station with pipes just under the floor but above the slab. Figure 4 shows the boiler and coal room:



Figure 4.

In Figure 4, you will see an exhaust flue to the chimney, a supply hot line with an expansion tank and cut out valve, and return cold line with a cut out valve and a pump, a make-up water line (runs by the chimney) and a pressure relief line that dumps to the floor ... all scratch made. The boiler casting is by Fine Scale Miniatures by Railroad KITS. The wall and door to the coal room were scratch built.

Details Details

The following photo montage shows the fun you can have detailing a full interior!



Figure 5.

Please take a close look at the photo montage in Figure 5. Yes, that is an HO scale cigarette and pack of Lucky Strikes on the ashtray. I made cigarettes by heating white plastic sprue with a lighter and pulling until I got the desired diameter, then cut, and painted on a filter. The ashtrays are simply aluminum tubing and washers painted Model Master "chrome".

Flimsy's! If you study the photos of the agent's office you will see flimsys in the filing tray, on clipboards hanging on the left wall and on the bay window desk, and in the garbage can. They are cut from an actual Milwaukee Road flimsy! Those clipboards are just images from the Internet copied to Power Point, resized, and printed on heavy paper. Cut them out with an X-acto or scissors, but don't forget to paint the edges if the printing paper is white.

In the express room, there is a pallet of cardboard boxes. These are individually made from a template printed on brown paper (Thank you Master Model Railroader Kevin Surman). Just cut, bend with a

straight edge, fold and glue with Elmer's white glue. Leaving a box open is a nice touch too. I will send you a PDF file of the template upon request (rsmith1@nycap.rr.com). I wonder if the lucky kid that is getting that bike in the express room was the one pictured in Part 1 of this article.

The 1938 Hiawatha painting on the non-smoking side of the station is an image of a painting off the Internet with a strip wood frame. The painting to the right was discovered missing one day and that has been a mystery ever since. I cut a piece of tape the size of the missing painting and applied it to the wall. I lightly weathered the wall with Bragdon Weathering chalks, then peeled away the tape. The Milwaukee Road 3 month calendar in the Agent's office is also an image from the Internet. I created the other signage inside the station (and outside) such as ticket signs, train bulletin (not shown), men's/women's room signs, REA, and station signs in Power Point. I will send you my Power Points upon request (rsmith1@nycap.rr.com).

Venetian blinds are brass etchings from Model Memories, cut to various lengths, painted Model Master glossy Light Ivory. The head rails are made from strip styrene.

Remaining scratch built items include: black safe and train order signal selector box in the agent's office, baggage room benches, restroom sinks, towel dispenser, toilet paper roll, and privy divider walls. The short radiators started from Fine Scale Miniatures by Railroad KITS (used throughout the station), with the middle sections cut out and the ends reattached.

I painted all detail parts except 3 figures (Preiser) and 4 castings (3 from Woodland Scenics, 1 from Mini-Metals). The commercial castings come from a number of manufacturers including: Kramer Products, JL Innovative Design, Preiser, Weston, Scale Structures Ltd., Finishing Touches, WeHonest (wall clocks), and various unknown manufactures. The station benches are a separate purchase from HRM Laser Models. And that agents chair and express room desk in Figure 5 ... they were from my long gone Mathews Mercantile model that I built when I was 12!

Lighting

In several of the photos in Part2, you may have noticed the station is lit. The next photo shows the effect (note, this is an earlier shot before gutters and any wall weathering):



Figure 6.

The interior lights are warm LEDs from WeHonest and come mounted on self-stick $\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{1}{4}$ " circuit board with a proper resistor and a quick connector for easy replacement. Just attach them where you want, and hook up 12V DC. In Figure 7 below, the 3 LED lights are wired in parallel to another quick connector to facilitate removing the roof. Wires for the female connector run down a "vent pipe" brass tube in the men's room (study Figure 2 to find the female connector). Also note in Figure 7, I added strips of basswood along the eaves to help block unwanted light showing between the walls and the roof. The interior window frames from HRM Laser Models are nicely designed to also block unwanted light from escaping around window cracks.

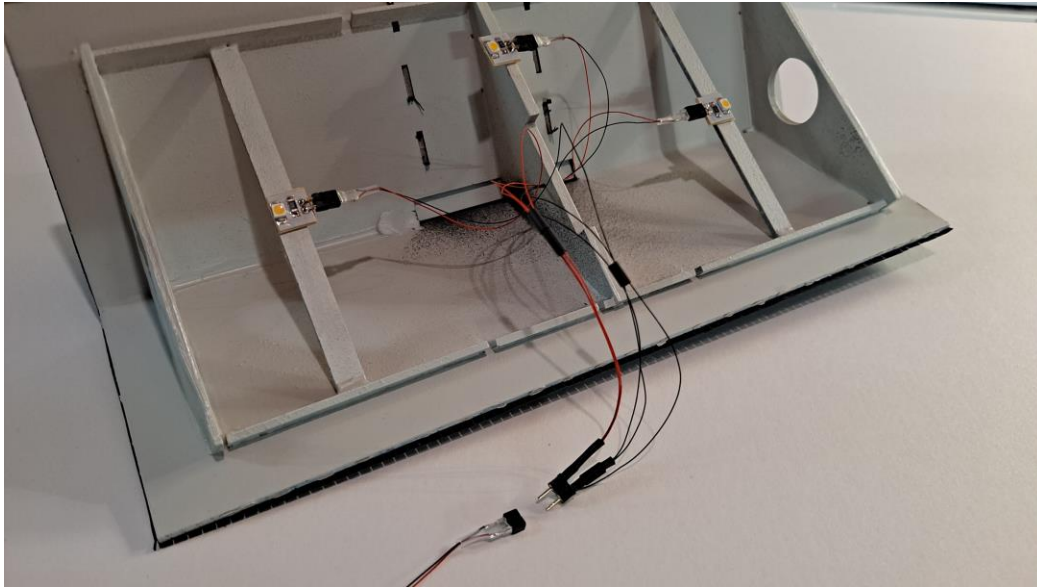


Figure 7.

Final Thoughts

I hope you have enjoyed my 3 part series on modeling Sparta Station, WI on the La Crosse and River Division of the Milwaukee Road. Maybe some of the tips and tricks as well as products I mentioned will help you with your modeling projects. Adding a full interior to your building project is fun but also comes with many interesting challenges, and is definitely more than twice the work, time, and fun. Taking an off-the-shelf kit and adding your own details by studying the actual prototype or by applying the principle of "prototype practice" makes your model one-of-a kind and special. It doesn't have to exactly match any particular photo or date. It should bring you and hopefully others enjoyment ... that is what matters!

Best regards,

Richard J. Smith
Saratoga Springs, NY

