



QUICK & DIRTY

freight car weathering

Easy ways to make rolling stock look more realistic

By John Pryke • Photos by the author

Many freight car weathering techniques produce a high degree of realism, but also tend to be time-consuming. If your layout has a large number of freight cars, you probably don't want to spend an entire evening weathering just one piece of rolling stock. As an alternative, I've developed a quick and dirty weathering method that requires only basic airbrushing skills and a little knowledge of the prototype.

Color selection

There are many paints on the market made specifically for weathering. Table 1 lists the water-based acrylic and organic-solvent-based enamel paints I used to duplicate the weathering pattern shown in fig. 1. It also lists the dilution formula

▲ In September 1948, an aging New Haven 2-8-2 hauls a peddler freight toward its next destination on John Pryke's HO scale layout. With a little prototype knowledge and an airbrush, John can apply weathering in a matter of minutes.

required to spray the paint through a fine airbrush tip without clogging. Weathering color choice is also dictated by a railroad's operating region. The color you choose to represent dirt and dust on a car's trucks and underbody is based on the area of the country that you model or on a car's home road. Table 2 shows some suggested truck and underbody colors for cars from different locations in North America.

Quick and dirty weathering

By using an airbrush with a fine tip and readily available enamel or acrylic model paints, you can weather one car in a few minutes or a batch of ten cars in less than an hour. It is important to follow each step in its proper sequence, as some prototype weathering (faded paint on side panels, soot on vertical side ribs) takes place over a long period, while other weathering (ballast dust on the underbody and accumulated