

Scratch Build a Shed

An easy beginner project that adds character to a model scene

By George Franke

Anyone who has gazed from the window of a train has seen a wide variety of scenes along the right-of-way and knows that in the back yards along the tracks there are all sorts of sheds and outbuildings. In modern times there are garages and sheds for garden equipment. In the steam era there were outhouses, smokehouses and barns; woodsheds and chicken coops; doghouses and dovecotes. Even today there are barns in many of the older sections of town, remnants of the era of real horsepower, converted to garages, used for storage, or left to disintegrate under the forces of nature.

Models of these outbuildings are small projects that can add more detail to your layout. Compare the two photographs of the trackside back yards, with and without sheds and associated clutter.

For the novice modeler, sheds are an excellent way to break into the art of scratch-building. For the experienced modeler they provide a break from the more intricate projects and they offer a good use for those short pieces of building material left over from the larger modeling efforts. The extra



A prototype shed that can be modeled.

window and door castings that accumulate can find a use here. Adjusting the dimensions of the sheds to the available materials enables you to use almost all your scraps.

Sheds are infinite in variety. Some are fancy, others plain. Some are well designed and solidly built, others are slapped together. They come in all sizes and configurations. I found the shed in the photograph above side by side with a very plain garage. There is no limit to what you can create as a shed. If you can dream it up there

is probably a prototype for it somewhere.

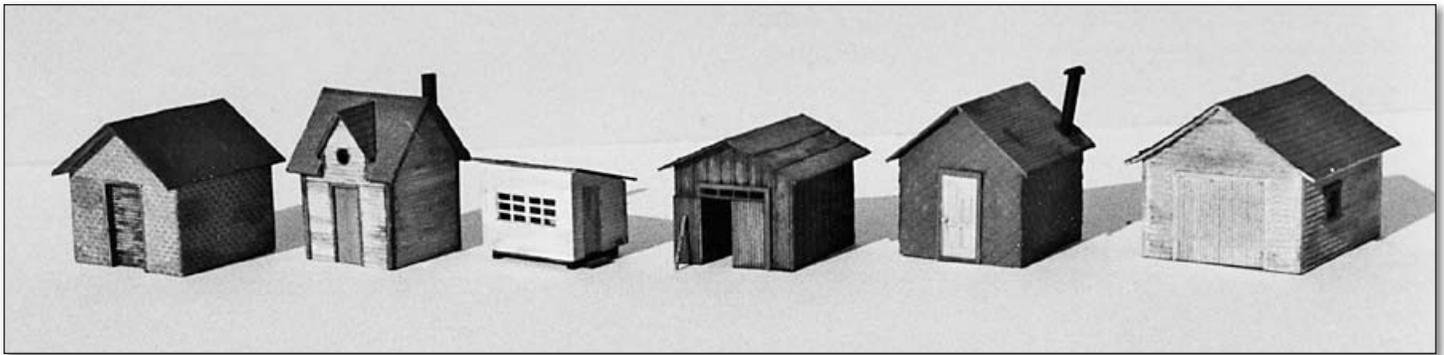
The models in the photograph (top, next page) were freelanced. The walls are either scribed wood siding, vinyl brick material, or illustration board, but you can also use styrene remnants from kit-bashing projects. The windows and doors are an assortment of leftovers—either Grandt Line or Campbell. Coverings for the illustration board walls are such things as: brown paper tape shingles cut with pinking shears, Holgate & Reynolds



Scene without sheds.



Scene with sheds and associated clutter.



A collection of freelanced sheds made from a variety of materials.

“asphalt shingle” or “brick” vinyl siding, or brick paper. Roofing materials include Campbell shingles and corrugated metal, tissue paper, black construction paper, and glossy paper from an old calendar.

CONSTRUCTION

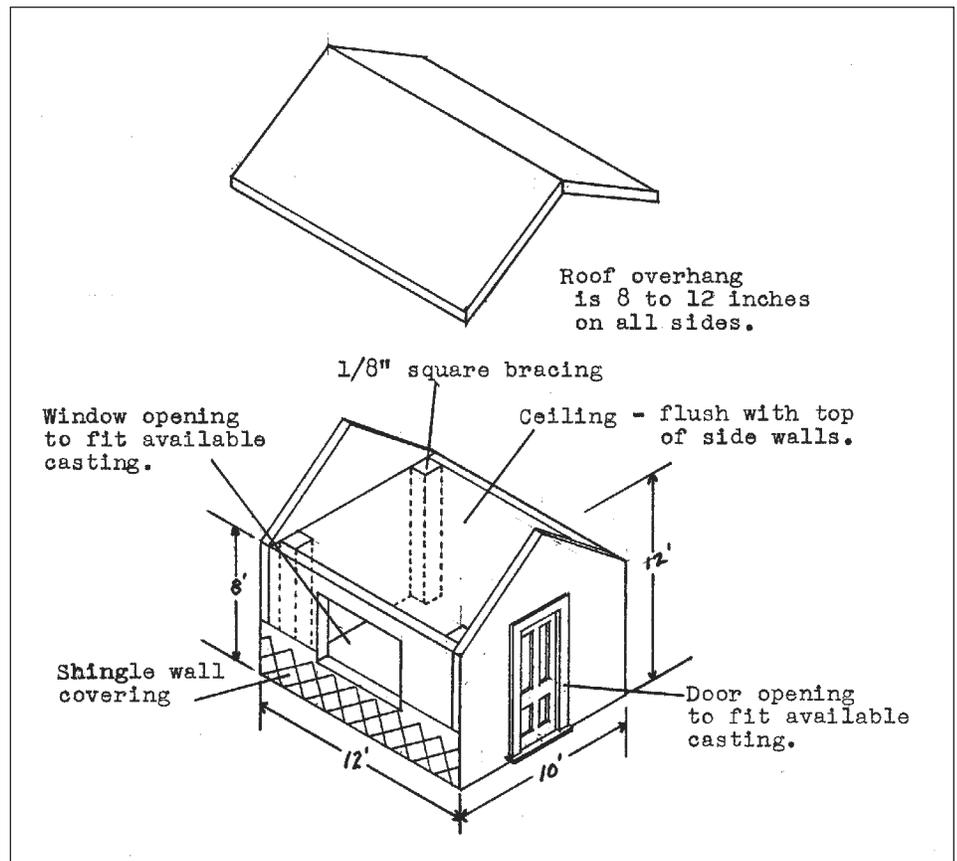
The construction sequence is as follows:

Measure available materials—siding and castings—and decide on the dimensions of the shed, or use the dimensions given in the accompanying drawing of a “generic” shed.

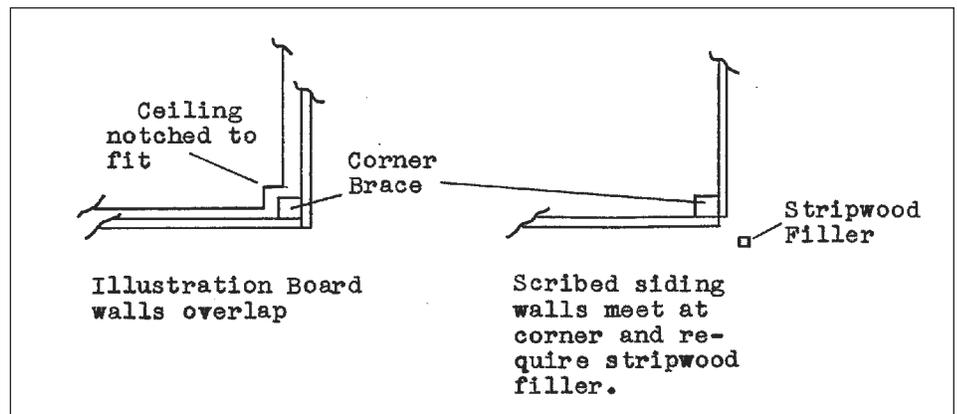
Cut four walls from the siding material and cut door and window openings to fit castings. Use a new blade whenever you start a new project. Cut the openings a bit shy of the actual needed dimensions and then use an emery board to file the openings to the exact fit.

Brace the corners of the building with 3/32” or 1/8” stripwood. Glue the braces to the side walls, flush with the vertical edges of the wall, using white glue. Hold them in place with spring type clothes pins until the glue is dry. If the building is larger, you may want to add horizontal bracing on the walls.

Glue the end walls to the braces on the side walls. If you are using illustration board, have the vertical edge of the end wall flush with the outer face of the side wall. If using scribed wood siding, glue the end wall to the brace



Drawing for a “generic” shed.



Corner bracing.

only, leaving a space in the corner between the two wall sections. This will be filled with a piece of square stripwood of thickness equal to that of the siding.

Add the desired wall covering if you are using illustration board walls.

Cut a ceiling and a floor for the building from thick cardboard or sheet basswood (at least 1/16" thick), making sure all corners are square. Cut notches in each corner to clear the braces. Glue the ceiling in place flush with the tops of the braces and the walls. This should keep your building square.

If you want a light in the building, this should be fastened to the ceiling with the wires fastened in a corner and coming out of the bottom of the building.

Install your pre-painted window and door castings and the glazing.

Install the floor in the same way you did the ceiling, but do not glue it in place. Cut it so that it fits snugly but can be removed in case you need to replace the light.

Depending on your roofing material your sub-roof can be cut from thick cardboard, sheet balsa, or 1/16" thick plywood (available in the hobby shop). If you will be using water or water based glue to attach the roofing materials (e.g. Campbell or brown paper tape shingles) some sub-roof material has a tendency to warp, giving an unwanted pagoda curve to the roof.

If the roof is peaked, glue a strip of wood or a bamboo skewer across the top, between the end walls to serve as the ridge beam to which the sub-roof is glued. This will keep the sub-roof from developing a caved-in look.

Add your roofing material—shingles, "tar-paper" (black construction paper or strips of tissue paper that are

painted black after the glue is dry), corrugated metal, or "seamed metal" (made from glossy calendar paper scribed with a ball point pen on the underside).

Details such as a smoke stack, chimney, vents, wood pile, hinges, ladders, posters, vines, graffiti, vines, garbage cans, fuel tanks, coiled hoses, etc. can be added now.

PAINTING

Painting and weathering are done with the idea that most sheds are not as well maintained as residences and are therefore more weathered in appearance. I use the following sequence:

Paint all window and door castings before installation. I apply a base coat of white to completely cover the casting. Then if there is a top coat of another color, I spray it on lightly leaving some of the white showing through. As a final coat on the castings I apply a wash of black shoe dye in rubbing alcohol (1:12).

Before gluing any wood parts together, give all parts a wash of the shoe dye mixture and allow to dry thoroughly.

Use extremely small amounts of water soluble glue during construction and wipe off all glue smears immediately with a moist, lint-free cloth.

After the walls, ceiling and roof are in place, but before installation of the castings, lightly spray the building with the color of choice, leaving some of the stained wood showing through.

Paint the roof the desired color. Weather it by rubbing blue or gray eye make-up on the roof.

Dry brush mud spatters on the bottom edges of the walls, soot smudges around the chimney, rust stains around metal parts, and bird droppings on the roof and chimney.

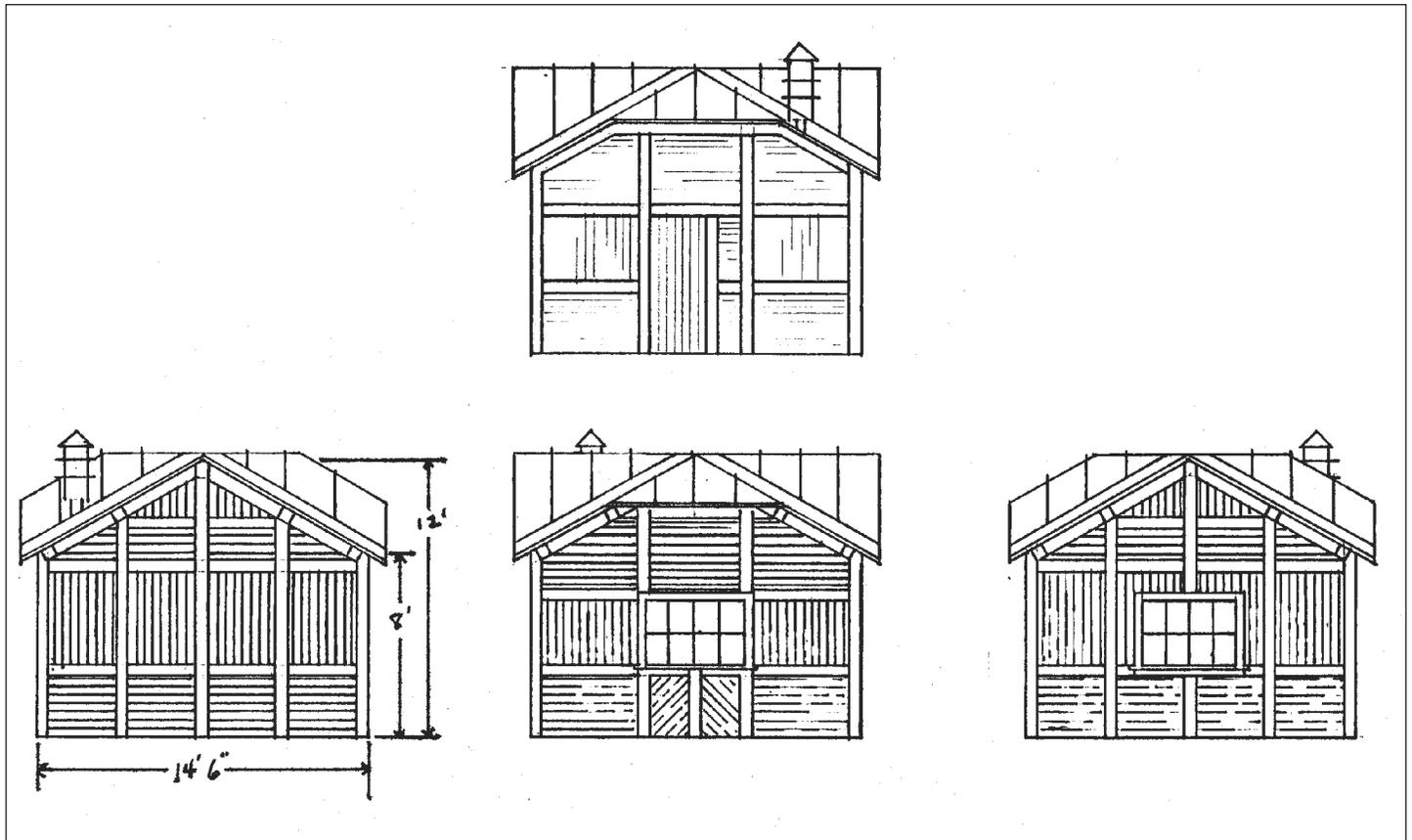
When the model is complete, place it on the layout and add weeds, fences, etc. to blend it in to the scene. Figures of animals and people using the shed will add to the realism. There is no rule that says that our larger models should always be the center of attention. A scene with a shed can be a very detailed and interesting part of the layout.

MODELING A PROTOTYPE

The model of the prototype shed in the color photographs and the



Street side of the prototype shed.



Drawing of the prototype shed.

accompanying drawing was built by first laying out the wall patterns on thin (1/32") poster board and then gluing 1/16" x 3/64" strip wood and sections of 1/32" scribed siding in the appropriate places. The door is another section of the scribed siding and the windows are Grandt Line No. 5081 (for the HO model). The standing seam metal roof was made with strips of glossy paper glued to the sub-roof with a slight overlap. The chimney is a piece of solid copper electric wire (standard house wiring size) with the insulation removed at the bottom and card stock fins (cut on a paper punch) added. The cap was made from a circle of card stock cut half way through and glued with an overlap to give it a peaked shape.

Next time you need a small project or have a pile of leftover building materials, try a shed. **I**



The finished model.