

# CAMAS PRAIRIE RAILROAD

Burlington Northern / Union Pacific Joint Line

*By Bob Sobol. Photos by Bob Sobol and Dave Zamzow.*

Bill Beranek opened his Camas Prairie for its first layout tour this month, and the tour did not disappoint. Turnout was a bit light, perhaps because Bill lives quite a ways north of Fort Collins. Those who chose not to drive missed out on a great tour!

The HO layout models a portion of west-central Idaho in 1988. The Union Pacific and Burlington Northern jointly operated the prototype for this bridge line. The modeled portion runs from Lewiston to Pocatello, Idaho. Staging yards serve unmodelled Seattle and Pocatello.

The layout fills a 20x22 foot room inside an outbuilding (which is basically a finished, heated garage with 3 small rooms to the side.) One room serves as a dedicated paint room (with a fabulous spray booth) and another has Bill's workbench.

It was hard to believe that Bill only started the layout two years ago. He said that he works on it about 2 hours a day. The workmanship shows that this is definitely not Bill's first layout.

Bill built the Camas Prairie to operate. Formal sessions have not yet started, but from what we saw they could begin any day. Operation will be point to point with a number of through trains such as the 1<sup>st</sup> class Western Fruit Express, unit grain trains and one unit coal train. There are also locals and switching in Lewiston Yard to keep operators busy. Digitrax DCC provides power.



Bill describes operation on the Caymas Prairie Railroad. *Bob Sobol*

The benchwork is quite unusual and deserves comment. Instead of a standard L-girder design, Bill used engineered floor joists. These incredibly strong members eliminate the need for almost all support legs, leaving the area under the layout extremely wide-open. This gives fantastic access when working under the layout. Perhaps best of all, the cost of lumber proved to be many hundreds of dollars less than L-girder!

Spline roadbed provides smooth curves and automatic easements. This too is unusual in that Bill used Masonite splines glued together with yellow wood glue. Plexiglass guard rails provide protection along sections of hidden track, including a short helix. Both the splines and guardrails were ripped on a table saw.

Most of the scenery uses Gypso-lite over "rigid wrap". Finish scenic materials adhere very well to the rough texture. Most of the forms are a cardboard strip lattice stuffed with newspaper. Bill tried Styrofoam forms in one section, but that proved less satisfactory.

Another creative design element is the access to staging yards. Instead of ducking under the layout to a hidden area, Bill hits a button to open two garage doors. This was great during the layout tour, as we had perfect, cool weather.

Thank you, Bill, for sharing your fine layout. Let us know when you want to start operations! **I**



Overview of the Camas Lewiston yard is off to the left. Spaulding is hidden behind the center divider. Prairie Staging tracks are off to the right.  
*Bob Sobol*



Spaulding, home of a grain elevator and cement plant. This area will keep a local switch crew busy for quite a while. *Bob Sobol*



Leaning into the curve. Bill's spline roadbed automatically produces superelevation. *Dave Zamzow*



John and Eleanor Bowman study finished scenery. *Bob Sobol*



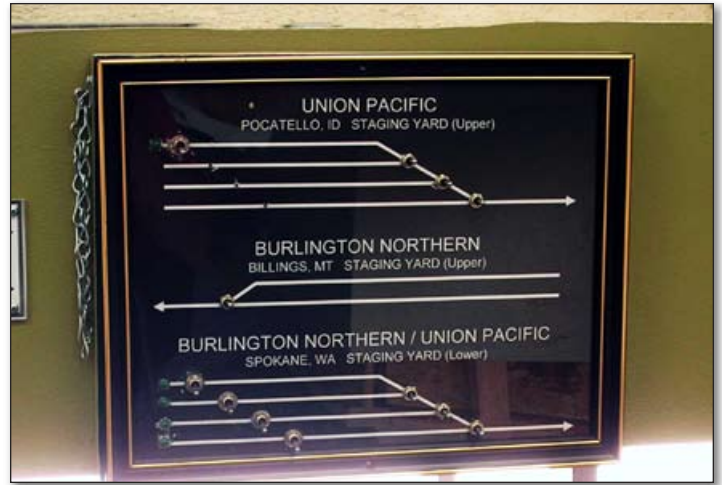
Find the mirror. *Dave Zamzow*



Looking in towards staging yards. Engineered floor joists eliminate all intermediate legs across the width of the layout *Dave Zamzow*



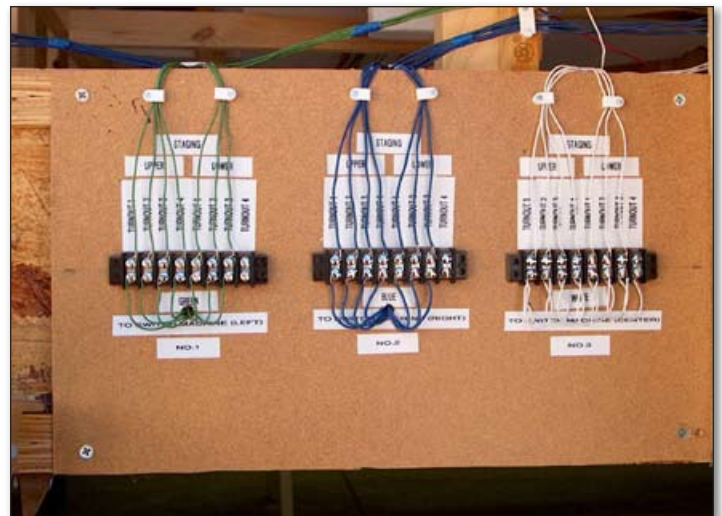
Lewiston yard. *Bob Sobol*



Staging yard control panel. *Dave Zamzow*



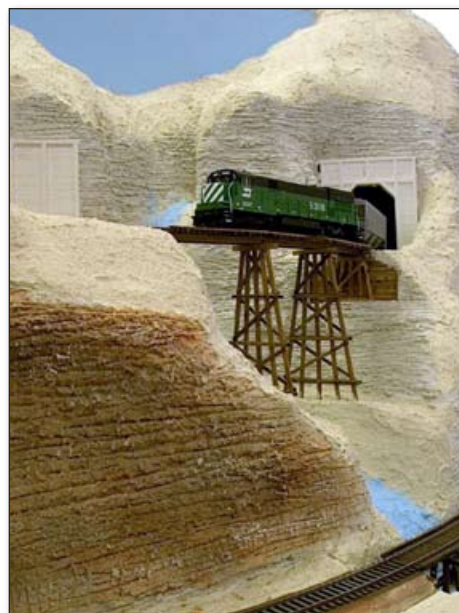
Lewiston engine terminal, where through freights receive fresh motive power. *Dave Zamzow*



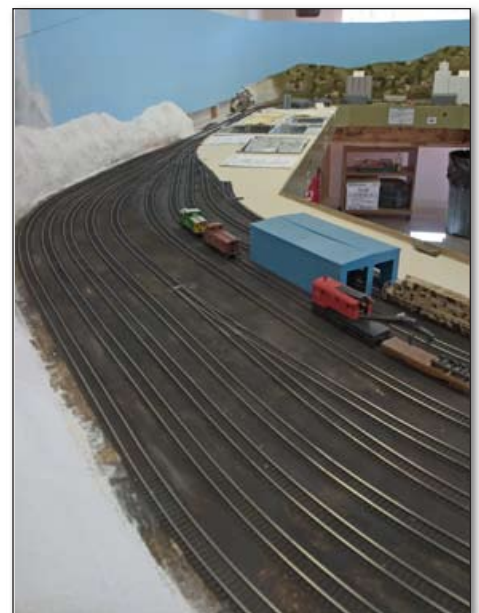
Neat turnout wiring. *Dave Zamzow*



Spline roadbed and guard rails. *Bob Sobol*



On the trestle. *Dave Zamzow*



Gentle sweep of yard tracks. *Bob Sobol*