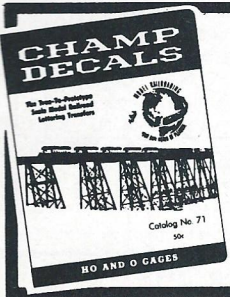


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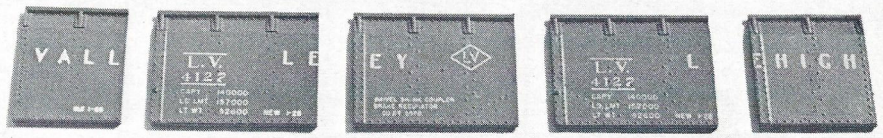
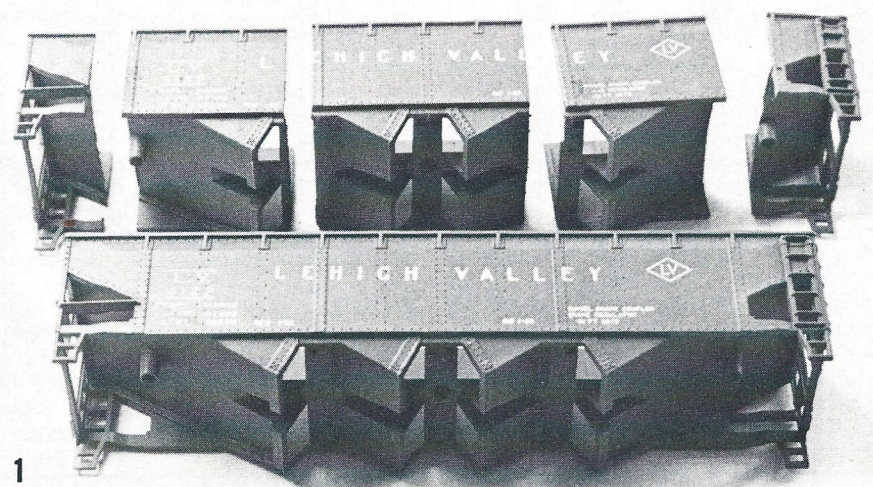
These huge cars were used in rotary car dumpers on the Virginian

BY JOHN MUNSON

I MODEL the Virginian Ry. as it was in the days before its merger with the Norfolk & Western Ry. Both roads are major coal haulers, and one of the Virginian's trademarks was a fleet of mas-

sive 105-ton gondolas. These cars were used, mostly on line, to move coal to the railway's coal docks at Sewells Point, Va. There the cars were dumped with rotary dumpers, so hoppers and slope sheets were not required — just a large box on wheels was all that was necessary.

I wanted quite a number of these cars,





Michael Meier.

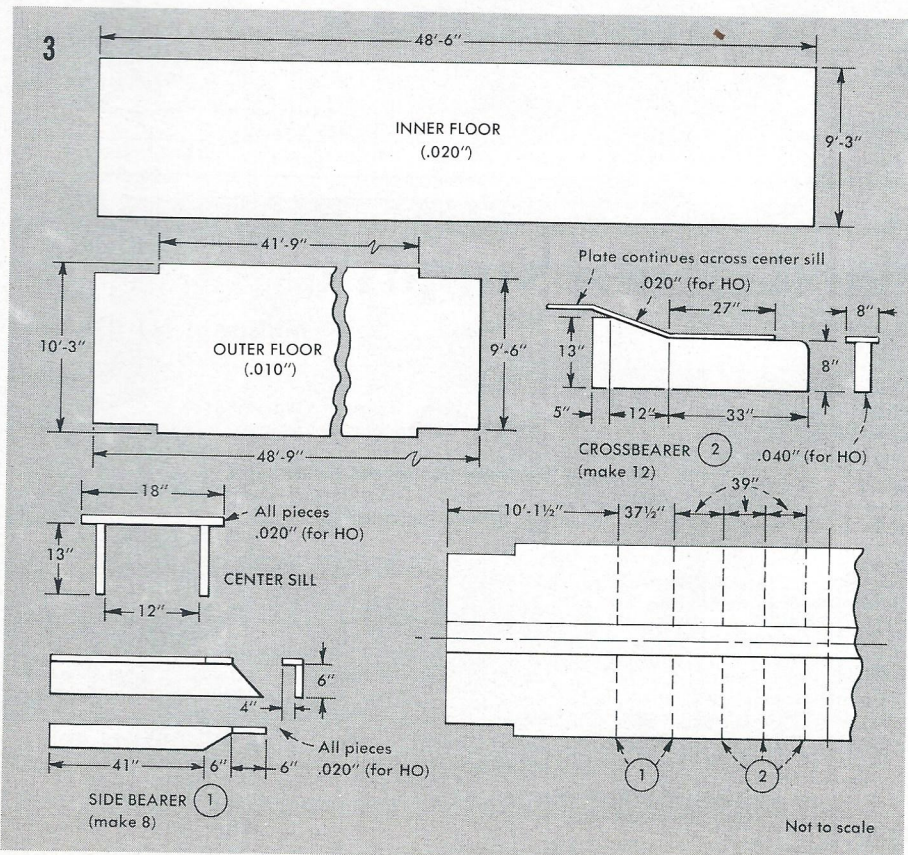
so I felt that scratchbuilding each car would be out of the question. Instead, I took a look at what was available in kit form that could be adapted to my needs. I found that splicing a pair of Athearn quad hopper cars and removing their hopper bottoms could provide a good start. This turned out to be a kitbashing job in the fullest sense of the words. Some scratchbuilt work was also required. My finished cars are about 24" shorter than the prototype cars, but you may find this hard to believe when the gondola is compared with a standard boxcar.

This conversion can be done in any scale if you can get a quad hopper car in the scale. All that is needed is similar side detail and spacing for the finished car. You will also need a pair of six-wheel Buckeye trucks for each finished car, two sets of AB brake equipment (I used Cal-Scale), and sheet styrene or ABS plastic in .010" and .020" sizes (for HO). The tools required are a razor saw, a model knife, a scale rule, and a flat mill file.

Begin cutting. Section the bodies, one car at a time, as shown in fig. 1. To make a cut, place the saw blade against the side

splice plate. The raised edge of the plate will help guide the saw. Draw the blade lightly back and forth until the cut is deep enough to keep the saw from slipping out. Make sure the top rail is being cut in line with the splice plate. Finish all cuts in the sides; then turn the car upside down and cut the sections apart.

When the second car is cut apart, make sure it is done the same way — if you are cutting on the brakewheel side of the braces on one car, be sure to cut the second one in exactly the same way. Due to mold differences, the two sides of the same car are not interchangeable. Square the side sections with a file, but do not take off any more material than is absolutely necessary, because they are very close to size already. Remove the sides from the hopper bottoms. (The hoppers are scrap, so don't worry about butchering them.) File all inside detail off the sides until they are flat. The center section of the original car provides the end pieces of the sides on the new car. Find the double row of rivets in the center of these pieces; cut them at the upper side reinforcement that protrudes just below the



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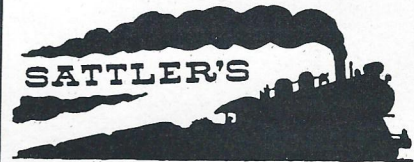
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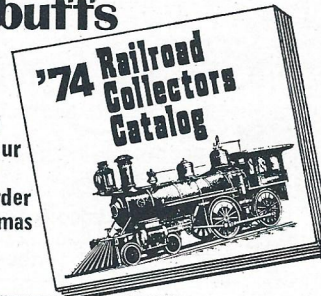
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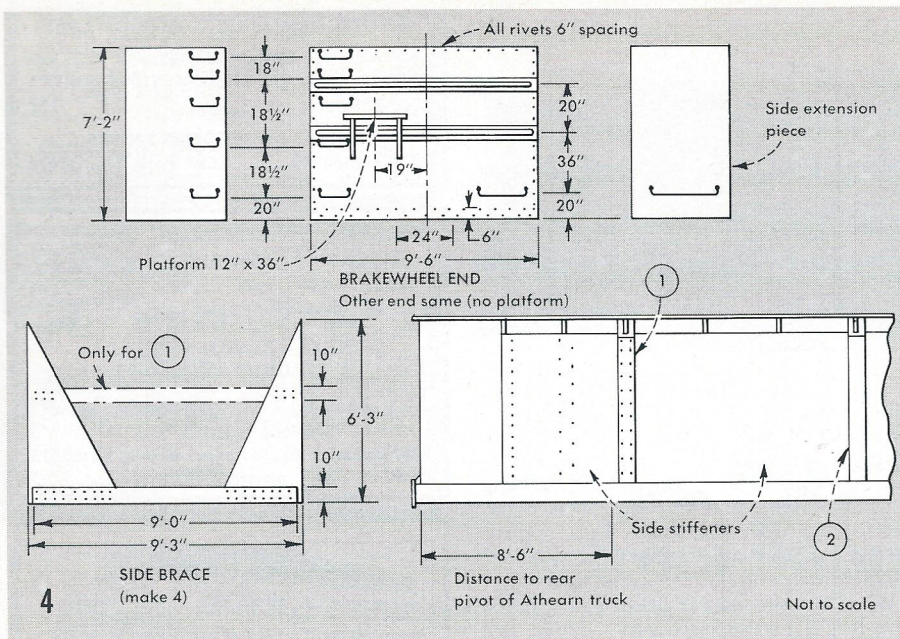
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top rail: see fig. 2. It will be easier if you use a square and scribe a line first.

When everything has been cut and squared, reassemble the pieces as shown in fig. 2. The diagonal line of rivets should be removed from all of the pieces with a sharp knife. The remainder of the car will be scratchbuilt.

Make the floor of two pieces of styrene

with a piece of 1/32"-thick sheet lead between them. Cut the inner floor from .020" and the outer floor from .010" styrene according to fig. 3. The underframe parts are also styrene. Refer to fig. 3 for the appropriate dimensions. My car does not have body bolsters, as there was not enough room to fit them in and still have the truck spaced properly from the floor.

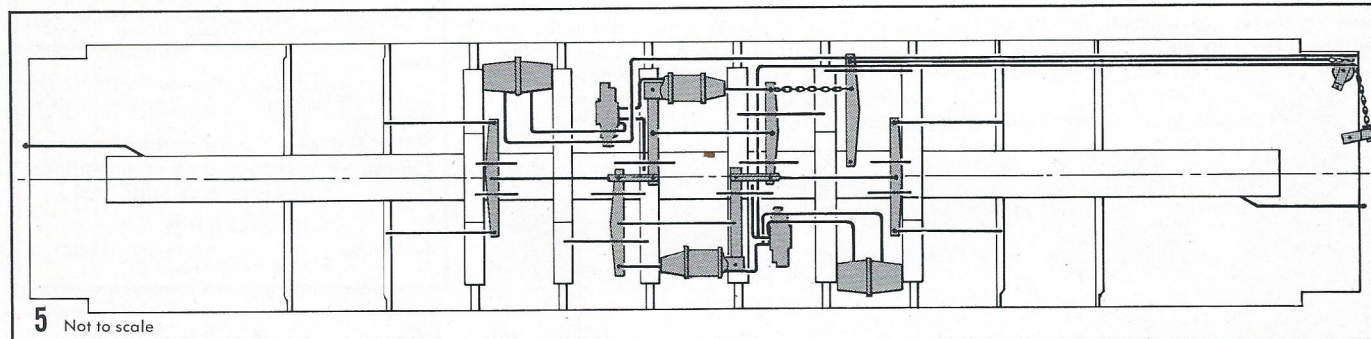
The wide center sill was used for truck mounting instead.

The next step is to fabricate the car ends from sheet styrene; dimensions and details are included in fig. 4. These pieces should be beveled where they join at the corners of the car. Once the end assembly has dried, cement the side pieces to the ends, making sure the sides line up inside the car to form a smooth surface. The step formed in the outside area is correct, as this protects the grab irons during the rotary dumping process.

Cement the completed body assembly to the floor. The outer floor should overlap the sides slightly so it can be trimmed to be flush with the sides. Add the side braces and stiffeners to the inside of the body as shown in fig. 4. Once everything has had time to dry thoroughly, file the sides until they are level all across the top of the car. Then add a flange of .020" styrene all around the top of the sides and ends. Final details such as brake gear, couplers, grab irons, poling pockets, are up to you. The brake gear is shown in fig. 5. Install the trucks (I used Athearn Buckeyes) and the car is ready for the paint shop.

Virginian's cars were painted black with white lettering. Other similar cars were also used by the C&O and the C&IM.

[For those modelers who like to work in metal, MR had an article on building these cars, using sheet copper, in the December 1958 issue, which is long out of print.]



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