

photography/JOHN ALLEN



PART 1 APPEARED IN DECEMBER 1980 RMC, PART 2 IN FEBRUARY 1981, PART 3 IN APRIL 1981, PART 4 IN JUNE 1981.

Remembering the Gorre & Daphetid

Part 5: We conclude our study of the Gorre & Daphetid with a look at the towns of Andrews and Port/**Jim Findley**



Fig. 5.1 ▲

Most people have a bit of showmanship in their nature, model railroaders not excluded. Part of this is due to the satisfaction derived from showing someone else what we've put together. John Allen was no exception, and he thoroughly enjoyed having visitors to his HO scale Gorre & Daphetid Railroad.

One part of the show was particularly theatrical for his guests: They followed John into a darkened basement, and not until they were well into the layout area did he turn on the main lighting. The effect was nothing short of spellbinding. In an instant, they were transported into a whole new world of mountains, canyons and cities, with railroad tracks to tie it all together—a world where time had stopped when steam was king. More often than not, there was an audible intake of breath by the guest as he, or she, or they, began to realize the prodigious amount of skill, artistry and downright witchcraft that had gone into this singularly masterful piece of work.

On the guests' left, close enough to touch, was Eagles Roost, the point where we left off in our last visit in the June 1981 issue, and where we will start on this last segment of our recalling of the G&D. You might want to refer one last time to the trackplan (Fig. 1.13) that appeared in the first installment (December 1980 RMC) for orientation.

A turnout at Eagle's Roost was the start of the longest passing siding on the railroad with both tracks leaving the mountain on bridges, the main line to the right and the siding to the left. The siding provided access to the Andrews switching complex via a second turnout. The turnout at the opposite end of this siding was actually at the edge of Cold Shoulder, and a run-around here covered as much track as there is on some small layouts. The G&D was large for a home layout with some 600 square feet of floor space, plenty of room for aiseways (at least 200 square feet) and by 1973 total track amounting to over 1000 linear feet.

Andrews occupied an area two by ten feet some 55" above the floor. In the initial

plans, it was intended to be a relatively long switching point for the second peddler and contain three long spurs. Eventually, a short run-around track and a facing spur were added, and Andrews did indeed become home for the second way freight. It also acquired some 15 industries to be worked and became one of the more interesting assignments on the railroad. The development of the area took a number of years, all of which are condensed into two remarkable photos. Figs. 5.2 and 5.3.

The depot at Andrews was a modified Atlas plastic kit and was a scheduled stop for the local passenger trains. The local stayed just long enough to disrupt the switching of the peddler operator before backing out to the main and proceeding to Cold Shoulder. To the right in Fig 5.1 is the bridge from Eagle's Roost, and to the left of the bridge is the stream we talked about in June—the one that used real water. Note the furnace in the earlier picture that was completely hidden by the scenery later. It's an amazing testimonial to the function and scope of scenery planning and construction.

There were two mirrors in this area—one at the end of the spurs, seen in Fig. 5.3, and the second to reflect the Westward HO Hotel as you entered the area. The "back wall" of the area was hinged and swung back for ease in painting the backdrop planned for Andrews.

With only some 30" between the trackwork and the ceiling, John resorted to another method of concealing the timbers supporting the house in this area. One example is visible in the center of the Fig. 5.2, the tall grain elevator. The second would have been an ore processing plant at one side of the mirror at the end, hiding both the edge of the mirror and the post. Time ran out on John before he got to this interesting project.

There were other notable structures at Andrews: The Westward HO Hotel was one, as a tower covered a projecting corner in the house foundation. And there was the Dextrus Bunker in the center of the trackwork that won a "best in show" at a Pacific Coast Region/NMRA convention in the late fifties.

It boasted an operating endless bucket belt and some two dozen separate light bulbs, as well as interior detailing.

Probably the most interesting structure was the Space Compressing factory near the front at the end of the facing spur. This was also animated and was John's way of wryly poking fun at the many model railroaders who spend a great deal of time lamenting the lack of space for all those features they want on their layouts. The factory had an unidentifiable space-compressing machine that busily turned and was operated by a figure standing beside it. To appreciate the effect, the visitor was obliged to look through the inevitable mirrors, a giant factory with dozens of machines and a host of workers—all earnestly engaged in compacting space for the hobby. (What a photo that might have made!) This little jewel also won contests, but the consensus of his operators was that, no matter how valuable the product might have been, they would have much preferred a time-stretching capability that would have afforded them a more deliberate approach to the intricate problems of delivering cars to their destinations.

The operations format at Andrews was generally simple although it does not follow that the execution thereof was the same. It required unscheduled runs with cars to Port where they were exchanged for a whole new consist of cars destined for delivery to those industries at Andrews, plus a couple for industrial spurs enroute.

The Catch-22 came about as a result of the rule that all cars at all industries were regarded as ready for onward movement at the start of an operating session—compounded by the fact that the run to Port was largely downgrade all the way. Thus, the tyro usually succumbed to the temptation to clean out as many cars as possible to give himself some breathing room in Andrews. The hitch came several sessions later when all of those cars inevitably returned to Andrews in an uphill run!

Experienced operators prudently took no more cars down than they could comfortably



G&D motor car No. 60 is shown pulling the RMC private car into the station at Andrews. The station was a kitbashed Atlas kit.

manage on the upgrade trip. Of course, when an unknowing visitor worked there for a session, he usually blithely ignored this hidden pitfall, and the regular Andrews engineer was apt to say bad words about having to double the hill a month later. Most of those who operated this second peddler with any degree of regularity loved it and took a proprietary attitude about it, since it was almost a separate layout in itself.

Leaving Andrews with its pleasantly steady activity, we move directly across the aisle to Port, where the action is considerably more turbulent. To set the scene, all of the large buildings against the backdrop were three-dimensional flats of varying height and depth, most of them made from heavy cardstock and all of them of original design. A photo mural might have been equally effective, but several things militated against this choice. The buildings would not have been of original design, which offended John's imaginative nature; a photo mural would have locked him into the design and configuration of many of the foreground industrial and commercial structures, which he found objectionable; and then there was the cost of having one made—the expense alone would have boggled John's inherently frugal mind. A good view of Port is shown in Fig. 2.2 in the February 1981 RMC.

In the operations scheme, Port was approximately the mid-point on the main line and as such inevitably became the most heavily trafficked spot on the railroad. All trains went through Port, be they way freights, prestige varnish, through freights, local passenger trains and the gas-electric. It was an exchange point for cars to most other areas, and there were some two dozen line-side industries to be switched. It is easy enough to see why working Port could reduce the operator to gibbering incoherency.

In the mid-sixties, after repeated suggestions by Cliff Robinson, a second control panel (East Port) was added to take some of the intense pressure off of the Port operator. And it did—temporarily. The single main

line was double-tracked by this time, and a little later this was augmented by still a third track. But the growth of the railroad wiped out the gains offered by the additional tracks and two operators. To the end, the area continued to be an exhilarating or punishing assignment, depending on your point of view.

The visual centerpiece of the Port area was the two-track Pratt truss bridge that spanned the boat basin. The G&D had between 40 and 50 bridges of varying length, and they covered just about every type generic to the species. Like all of them, this bridge seemed exactly right for its location. One track on the bridge was the main line; the second track was used as a yard lead, or drill track, to make up trains. Alternating in application, these tracks also held outgoing and incoming trains as the schedule necessitated.

These tracks, coming out of the main yard to the left, followed a sweeping twelve-foot-radius curve, and this generous curve somehow had the effect of making the curves near them appear larger. One turnout of a crossover was actually on the span with the linkage so artfully hidden by a pier that few people recognized the long range planning it must have required. For many years, trains ran across this bridge without the intricate arched steel superstructure as it appears in Fig. 5.4, but when it was finished (Fig. 5.7), it was worth all of the waiting.

One of the railroad's many mini-scenes or vignettes—and there were dozens—was a painter's scaffold on the approach span complete with painters. Sure enough, the bridge was orange oxide on one side of the figures and flat silver on the other—irrefutable proof that they were really working their way along the girders.

Access pits, liftofts and other arrangements to allow modelers to reach otherwise inaccessible areas are as diverse as the circumstances that mandate them in the first place. But there was one in Port that deserves mentioning. The fact that it was in the center of a large area liberally sprinkled with obstructions (including that truss

bridge in front of it) led John to an elevator-type contrivance to gain access. An entire two-by-three-foot section of the industrial complex was built on a movable base; since there was no reaching it from the top, it was designed with legs that allowed it to be lifted vertically from underneath. Once it was at the desired height, it could be clamped in place while work was performed near it. It was always a traumatic experience to see a whole city block of the city suddenly and mysteriously levitate ceilingward with no visible means of propulsion when John decided to use it.

The lower-level track across the entrance to the boat basin was always intended to be an operating Bascule lift bridge. Considering all of the other operating features on the G&D, making it operate would have been no great hurdle for a builder of John's caliber. However, the bridge was never completed, and the track remained on temporary roadbed till the end of the layout. The reason might have been that, having seen his original single-track main grow to three tracks, John could never quite be sure that still a fourth track might not become necessary. He commented morosely that a lift bridge would require the full detailing treatment underneath—and that took more time than even John was willing to part with when so many other things captured his interest. Finally, lurking in the back of everyone's mind was the cold certainty that before the bridge could be raised, every car on all three tracks would have had to be pulled by the Port operator, already a driven man. But everyone also agreed that if it had been installed, it would have been done with the style and skill that was a G&D trademark.

A good illustration of the term "three-dimensional flats" appears in Fig. 5.5. The two large buildings against the backdrop are L shaped and consist of only the two front walls of the structures. Port Plastics on the left was made of cardstock, while the apartment building on the right was assembled from dozens of identical plaster castings, each one floor high and three windows (plus a dividing quoin) wide. Where appropriate, such as at the fire escape platforms, one of the windows was elongated for a door. The fire escapes were complete to include railings and individual treads on each step of the stairways. Both of the buildings were weathered with dry powders, a technique used for just about everything from buildings to locomotives and even trackwork.

Between the buildings is another example of John Allen's use of mirrors with the top of the mirror hidden by the catwalk between the buildings in this case. There were, by John's count, 27 mirrors on the layout, but their applications were so ingenious and their locations so cleverly disguised that one of his close friends, long and intimately associated with the railroad, could never count more than 19. (John's skill in this field was enough to muddle the mind of Merlin.) The poor feller finally gave up and accused the

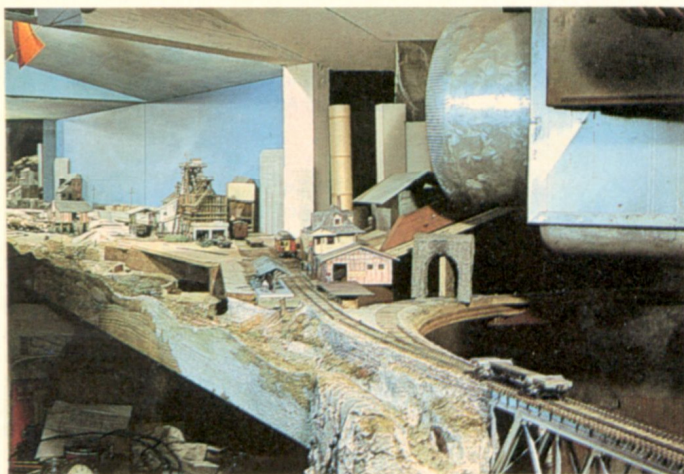


Fig. 5.2 ▲

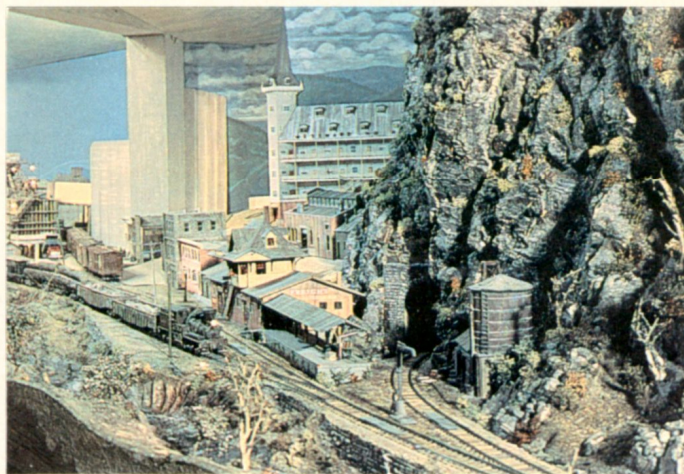


Fig. 5.3 ▲

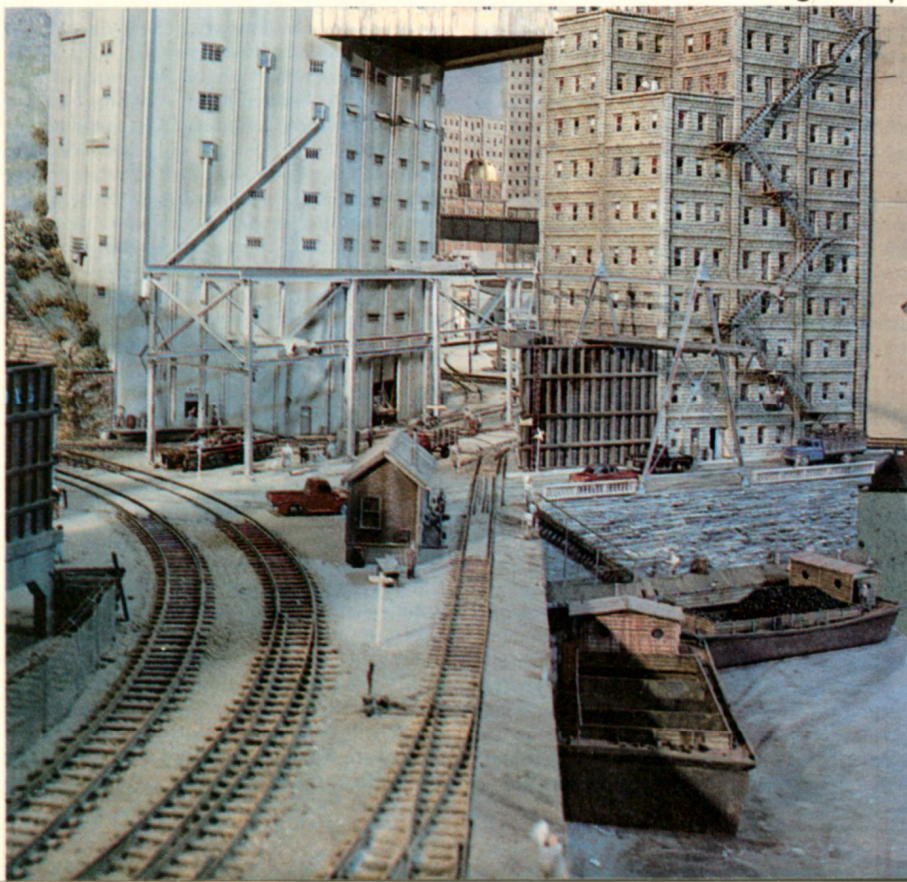
Over the years Andrews changed considerably as new industries were added. The photo on the left shows Andrews during the earlier stages of the layout, while the picture on the right shows the town after it had been built up. Eventually, some 15 industries were located on this portion of the layout.



Fig. 5.4 ▲

An early scene at Port (left) shows the G&D round house there, as well as the main line to Great Divide swinging off to the right. The harbor scene (below) shows more of the wizardry of John Allen. The realistic looking water was modeled out of plaster, painted bluish green, and then coated with varnish. The two large buildings in the background were only two sided, but they were carefully positioned in such a way that they appeared to be complete models.

Fig. 5.5 ▼



Maestro of having grossly exaggerated the figure. He wasn't above some stretching of the facts and if pinned down he could, and did, claim a faulty memory. See Figs. 3.2 and 3.9 in the April 1981 issue for other uses of mirrors.

Early in the railroad's history, John genuinely intended to put real water in the boat basin. He even planned on a live fish to keep the surface free of stray insects, observing that a 6" fish would become a 40-foot whale. But the combined problems of supporting several hundred pounds of water and what the water would do to the humidity in the basement persuaded him to abandon the plan.

Once having concluded that the use of real water in the basin would be a chancy undertaking, he fell back on his considerable skills as an artist/sculptor. To seal the basin, he used plaster for the water, shaping it into gentle waves and swells as he went. The dried plaster was painted a bluish green with water colors and, finally, was given a coat of clear spar varnish to provide a satisfactorily wet look.

In the course of time, dust would settle on the surface and detract from the overall appearance, necessitating occasional wiping of the "water" with a damp cloth. The film of dust was especially noticeable if some visitor

had given it an exploratory swipe with an inquisitive finger. Since parts of the basin were difficult to reach, John had mixed feelings about these explorations—he was pleased and proud that the water looked so deceptively real, yet extremely provoked that the explorations required frequent cleaning of the basin. His profanity could be altogether arresting at these times, but then John's cage rattled in the lightest of breezes, or even no breeze at all.

The idea of water without boats infringed on his sense of the fitness of things, so he introduced several to the basin to add to the authenticity of the scene. There were a pair of bulk-cargo barges tied to a pier with a spur on the pier and a crane for handling sand, gravel coal and such like. An old Revell kit for a sea-going tug was modified to bring it closer to HO scale, and these set off the *piece de resistance*, the car ferry *Anabel*, named for a favorite niece.

The *Anabel* was scratchbuilt, profusely lighted, and accurately detailed from the 48 stars in the flag down to the barnacle-encrusted waterline. Having elected to have a car ferry, he determined to make it part of the operations. He put in a ferry slip (Fig. 5.6) with tracks giving access to the vessel, and it became an additional destination for cars of all types which arrived and departed in accordance with the master plan, or John's whim, whichever held precedence at the moment.

The on-board tracks were not powered, nor did they need to be since the locomotives were forbidden to set wheels on the ferry lest the craft capsize. Carrying this rationale a step further, the rules dictated that there was never to be an imbalance between the two tracks of more than one car during the

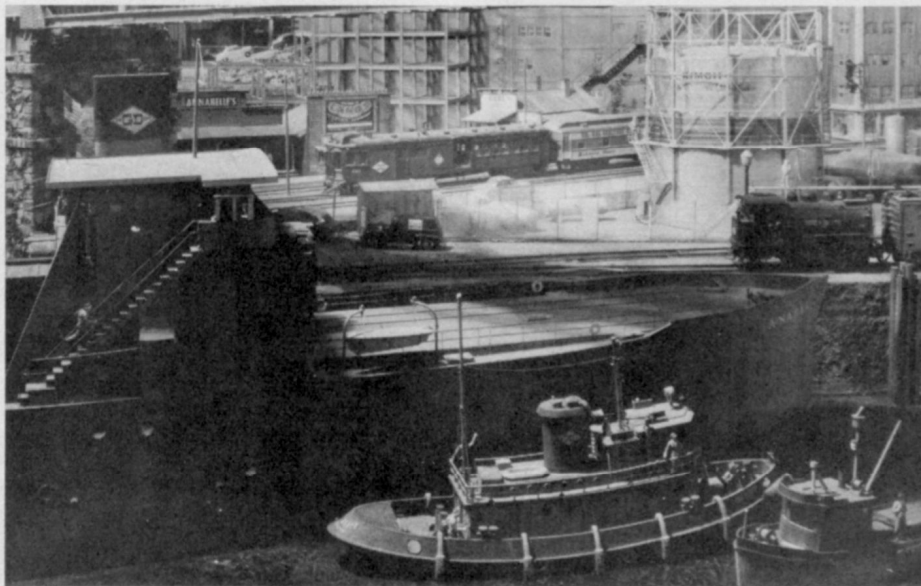


Fig. 5.6 ▲

loading and off-loading switching. To compound this Gordian knot, there was a sign over the entrance to the ferry slip announcing the arrival and departure time of the *Anabel* . . . and woe betide the misguided wretch who inadvertently tried to deliver cars to the ferry when the master clock (and master clockwatcher) decreed it to be elsewhere! As mentioned earlier, Port was by any standards a real bear to run, and only genuine tigers took the throttle there.

It has been fun to re-visit the Gorre & Daphetid, and in spite of the length of this

six-part treatise in every other issue since last December, it barely scratches the surface of the layout. Trying to describe it in its entirety would be as difficult as a visitor trying to take it all in in one visit. John once offered the opinion that his usual guests, whose stay amounted to four hours at most, never truly "saw" the whole layout. Old friends, frequent visitors, and even his operating crew were constantly finding "new" particulars to marvel at—things that had actually been there for years but had gone unnoticed in the incredible sweep of the whole railroad.

▼ Fig. 5.7

