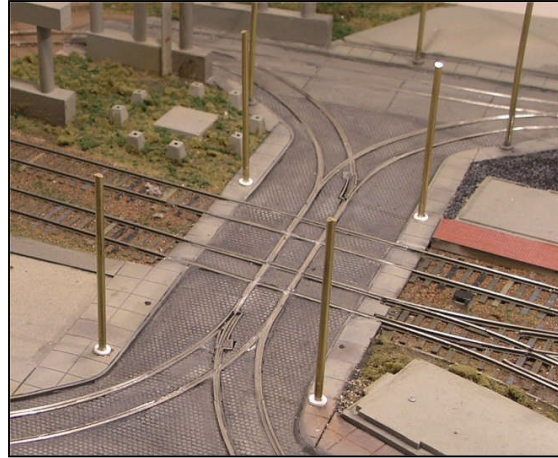


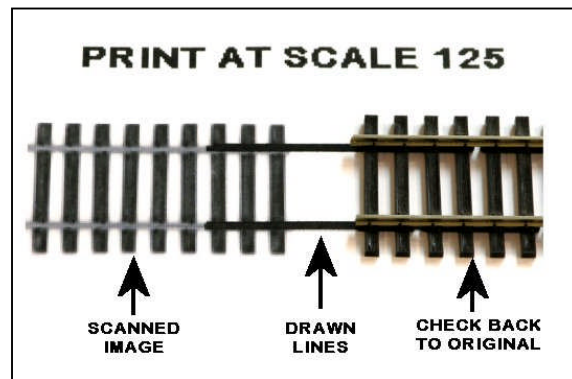
Designing and Constructing Custom Trackwork By Fred Miller, MMR

My modeling interest is in the world of HO trolleys. Unfortunately modeling HO traction means I have to build most of my trackwork from scratch. As a result I have developed a set of techniques that work for me and may be of interest to other modelers including those interested in building custom trackwork for traditional railroads.

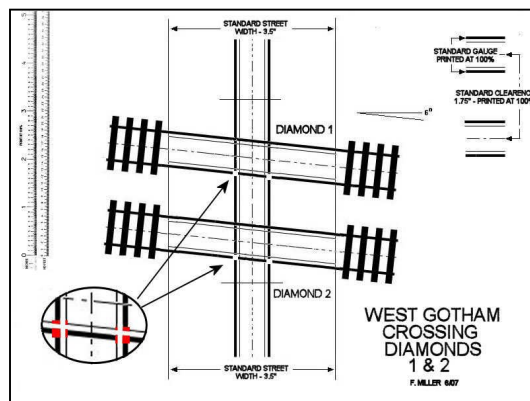


1. I have found that using an image scanner and a graphics-drawing program on my PC gives me a great set of tools to develop plans and templates for my custom trackwork. I use one of the earlier versions of Jasc's PaintShop Pro®.

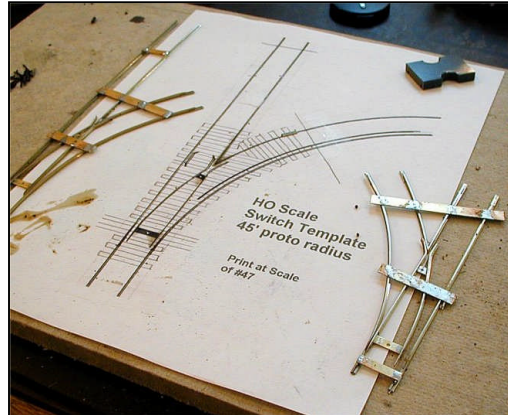
The key to developing a plan which can be used later as a construction template, is to figure out the appropriate match between the drawing scale and the printed paper template. Scanning a piece of model track can make a good start at this match. For example put a piece of flex track, or even a whole turnout, in a scanner and copy it into your drawing program. Draw some lines into this scanned image to represent rails and do some trial printouts, varying the print scale. Keep track of each test print until you find the scale that produces a printout that matches the actual flex track and then mark that scale in your drawing. You should save this drawing to use in future projects so you do not have to repeat this "scaling" step.



2. Now using the drawn track lines, create your custom track design. You can use the drawing program's tools to rotate and cut/copy/paste to build up the design starting just from those original drawn track lines. One of my custom track work designs is shown in one of the illustrations.



3. I use a printed copy of the design as a template for construction. I tape down the printed page to some Homosote and then start cutting and filing rail to size and shape. I spike the rail into position right over the printed template, soldering when appropriate. Use of a track gauge would be a good check on positioning. I use temporary soldered brass strips to hold the custom trackwork rails in position when moving the assembly to the layout.



This discussion did not go into the shaping of custom rail work such as points and frogs which has been covered in the modeling press. But it has instead focused on a way of developing the custom trackwork plan and a working template.