



THE ROUTE

This layout models several areas along a route from Rensselaer Yard (across the Hudson River from Albany, New York), which represents the eastern end of the railroad, to Ogdensburg (west end), along the St. Lawrence River in northern New York State. The period is August of 1955. Rensselaer Yard is a combination staging area and “fiddle” yard, located in a 6’ by 24’ storage room. It includes four staging tracks and 18 storage tracks (plastic bin drawers). It also has four locomotive storage tracks, two caboose tracks, a reversing loop and two arrival/departure tracks. Switches in this room are all controlled by Caboose Industries ground throws.

The staging yard exits through a wall into a 24’ by 17’ train room and Albany, New York’s Union Station. The station features eight tracks, three of which are pull-through that travel under an overhead passenger concourse. The other five are stub ended tracks, two of which are used for staging passenger trains. There is also a main line freight track that runs under the station from Rensselaer Yard. The Delaware & Hudson line from Saranac Lake connects just west of Union Station. Its route includes the Port of Albany area.

From Albany, the NYC main line travels through a view block (magically, 158 miles to the northwest) and enters the Adirondack Mountains on NYC’s Adirondack Division, at the tiny stop of Childwold Park Station. This stop connects passengers via car to the Childwold Park Hotel on Massawepie Lake, four miles to the west. The route travels another 10 miles to Tupper Lake Junction. Here, the station serves both the NYC and the New York, Ontario and Western RR (the latter, an inactive track – for appearance only). Tupper Lake is the second largest city in the Adirondack Park. There is a half dozen rail-served industries here.

The Adirondack Division continues north to the vacation station stop of Saranac Inn, another of the many “Adirondack Camps” (hotels) that were popular from the later 19th century through the first half of the 20th century. The prototype hotel is located two miles away on Upper Saranac Lake. There are two small sidings at Saranac Inn for a livestock pen and a coal drop.

Another nine miles up, the line comes to Lake Clear Junction. This is where the NYC Saranac Lake-Lake Placid branch line diverts to the east while the Adirondack Division continues north (west by timetable). The branch line is modeled to Saranac Lake. At that point, The Delaware & Hudson (D&H) Railway continues through Loon Lake and winds back to Albany. Saranac Lake is the largest city in the Adirondack Park. There, along with its neighbor, East Saranac Lake, are eight industries, including an aggregate open pit mine, and a passenger station.

Back on the Adirondack Division at Lake Clear Junction, traveling west is the small city of Malone, NY. Located here are two industries and a passenger depot.

Further west (north by compass) is the Massena Industrial area that includes St. Lawrence Manufacturing Co. and a coal dealer. The city of Massena comes next, which has a busy passing track and passenger depot.

From Massena, the route travels by Lisbon, which has a spur to a local dairy, and then arrives in the Ogdensburg area, a port city on the St. Lawrence River. The Ogdensburg portion of the layout is divided into several sections, including East Ogdensburg, the Port of Ogdensburg and West Ogdensburg. East Ogdensburg includes a locomotive service area with six-stall roundhouse, a passenger depot and several industries. The year 1955 is still four years before the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, so freighters longer than 300' could travel down river only far as the Port of Ogdensburg. A portion of the port is being modeled, including a typical 300' "Laker" ship. In West Ogdensburg is a passenger station, industrial areas, and it is the location of North Country Yard.

Just past West Ogdensburg, the route makes a long down-hill run (lower level under Ogdensburg) to Buffalo, NY, which is a three-track staging yard. It is the western end of the railroad. Exiting staging, trains travel uphill (a reversing section) back to West Ogdensburg and North Country yard.

MOTIVE POWER AND ROLLING STOCK

As a transition era layout, it includes several steam engines; two Hudsons that have long since passed their glory days hauling the Central's passenger trains and are now relegated to freight service, and a Niagara, the largest steam engine on the layout. It generally pulls heavy freight and unit coal trains.

Diesel road freight motive power includes EMD F7s, FAs, F2s, F3s, three GP7s and an Alco RS-3 (D&H). There are five SW 7 and NW2 switching engines handling Rensselaer Yard, North Country Yard, Albany Union Station, Saranac Lake industries and movements at the Port of Ogdensburg and Ogdensburg Industrial.

Passenger trains are busy on the layout and are led by an EMD E8 A, two E7 A-B sets and two PA-1s (D&H). The Delaware and Hudson Railway shares Union Station in Albany and has trackage rights throughout the Adirondack Division and Saranac Branch.

The layout has more than 230 freight and MOW cars, 20 passenger cars of various types and 38 locomotives (prototypically, several are in the shop for repair). Passenger equipment includes the Walthers, nine-car *20th Century Limited*, though it doesn't yet traverse the layout due to mechanical limitations.

STRUCTURES AND SCENERY

The city of Albany and Union Station areas have 29 buildings from a number of kit manufacturers or scratch built. All are custom painted and most are lighted. Many include partial interiors. The trestle east of Loon Lake is scratch-built and more than 30 years old. Photo backdrops and mirrors help to extend perceived distances in downtown Albany. Backdrops are a combination of photo and painted on 1/8" tempered hardboard and drywall. There are close to 1,000 trees on the layout with more to come. The mountainous terrain is constructed with cardboard strips and extruded foam covered with plaster wrap.

OPERATION AND CONSTRUCTION

Digitrax DCC (Simplex) operating system is used with radio throttles to operate the layout. There are two power districts. Track is Code 83 on the main line. Passing sidings are a mix of Code 83 and Code 70. Track at the hidden Buffalo staging yard under Ogdensburg is Code 100. Turnouts are mostly from Walther's with a handful Peco. 150 turnouts are powered by Tortoise Switch Machines, except in Rensselaer Yard where Caboose Industries ground throws are used.

Construction on the layout began in 2001, shortly after moving into our home. Remodeling of part of the layout in the original train room, and the creation of the "hidden" Rensselaer Yard was begun in 2009. The expansion into another portion of the basement (24' x 12') to create the Ogdensburg end of the layout, including the hidden staging yard below it, was begun in 2013. 100% of the track is operational.

There is much more to do, including most of the scenery and structures in the western half of the railroad. More scenery and structures will also be added to the original layout room in Saranac Lake and Tupper Lake.

The western half of the railroad has been wired for train detection, transponding and signals and will use a CTC system (JMRI software/computer monitor) with dispatcher. Until those are fully in place, the dispatcher uses a large magnetic control panel and JMRI Operations. Car management is with JMRI Operations (manifest and switch lists). Signals will be added to the main line and passing tracks. The older portion of the layout will eventually have CTC as well.

There is a Dispatcher's Office and model workbench located in an office adjacent to the layout. Communication to train crews and Yard masters is with FRS radios.

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