

Small Layouts

Brett - A switching layout design

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Source: <http://mogtrains.blogspot.co.uk/>

1 Overview

Previously known as Dreary, Martin's layout has been renamed to Brett after a recent revamp. Still set in Idaho in the early 80s the layout is at the end of a branch line, now under the ownership the Yellow Pine Railroad (YPRR). Essentially a run-around loop, with industries off each end of the loop and an interchange track, trains enter from front right and loads are spotted at industries according to the crew's switch list for that day.

Martin says that his attention has wandered recently and that the railway had taken a backseat to other modelling interests. "I decided to re-vamp the shelf layout. I have various plans brewing for another American one, but I decided to try to get some more out of this and I have to say, so far it is working."

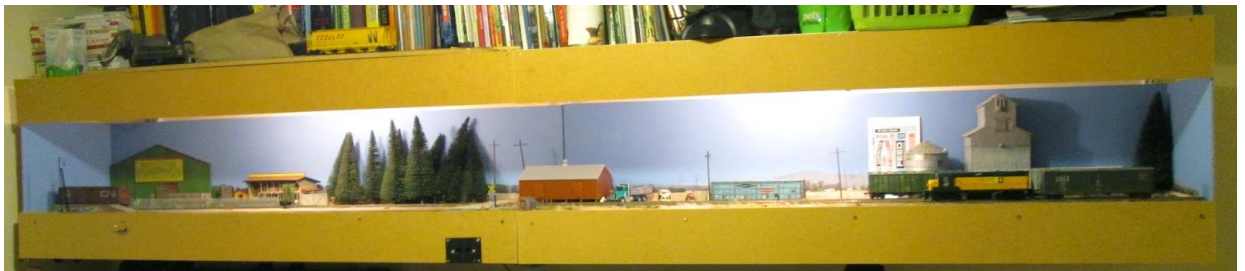


Photo 1: Brett in its entirety

2 Track plan

The layout measures 8 x 1 feet wide. The layout is essentially a loop with sidings. The original track plan is shown below.

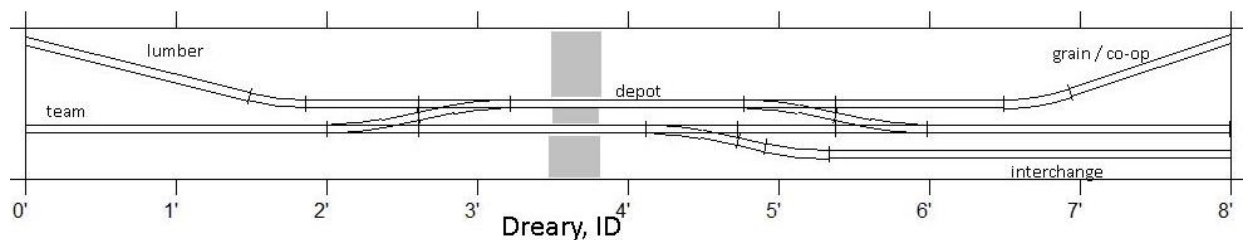


Figure 1: The original track plan for Dreary, ID

Martin says "there is no hidden staging or fiddle yard".

"The track at the front right acts as the 'interchange' or in/out track."

Early on in the design Martin decided that there was "little point in creating an illusion of 'somewhere else' as this layout wasn't going to be leaving my spare room".

"The front track acts as the on-scene staging and provides the start and end point for the game play."

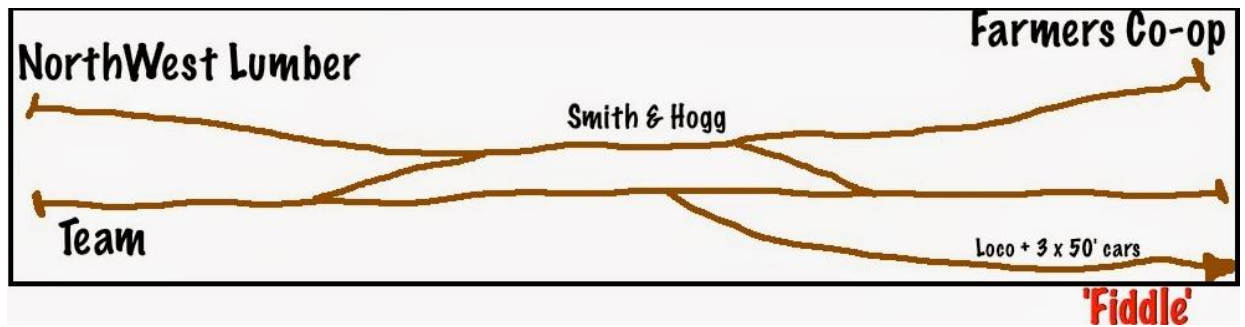


Figure 2: The final track plan for Brett

As shown in the track plan in Figure 2 above the loop in front of Smith & Hogg's can hold three 50 foot cars, Northwest Lumber takes 2 cars, the Farmers Co-Op can handle three 50 foot cars, while the team track and Smith and Hogg can each manage a single car.



Photo 2: The layout looking from the team track back to the interchange

The aim of the game Martin says is “not to overload the layout with too many cars”. Martin prefers to switch a couple of cars for 30 minutes at day's end, rather than spend a couple of hours once every now and then.

“Only having to setup a couple of cars means it is faster to set up and tear down an operating session at the end of the working day.”

“I planned 1 loco plus 2 or 3 cars to be an ideal length to allow switching moves.”

“The 'interchange' or fiddle track at front is the same.”

3 Industries

There are four industry spots on the layout. From Left to right they are:

- Team track
- Northwest Lumber
- Smith & Hogg Hardware, and
- Brett Elevator (Farmer's Co-Op)

3.1 Team Track

Spur length	60 ft.
Spots	1
Commodities handled	Almost anything can be loaded or unloaded on the team track
Loading facilities	Unloading platform with multiple truck dock and end ramp access
Car types handled	Any car that can be spotted at the facility

Table 1: Team Track Spur Details



Photo 3: The team track

3.2 Northwest Lumber

Spur length	110 ft.
Spots	2
Commodities handled	dimensional lumber
Loading facilities	Concrete Pad
Car types handled	Boxcars, Curtain sided box cars, Bulkhead Flat cars (shown in Photo 4 below), and Centrebeam cars.

Table 2: Northwest Lumber spur details



Photo 4: Northwest Lumber's spur

3.3 Smith & Hogg Hardware

Spur length	60 ft.
Spots	1
Commodities handled	General hardware deliveries
Loading facilities	Loading Doors x 2
Car types handled	Box,

Table 3: Smith & Hogg spur details

Still waiting some signage, 'Smith and Hogg' Hardware Supplies still receives shipment by rail. Martin made a point of not over-weathering this building. He kept the colours fairly neutral. He used "Google Street-view to look at buildings similar to this in the area".

"Most line-side buildings in this area are built of weathered grey or somewhat newer galvanised metal siding."



Photo 5: Smith & Hogg

3.4 Brett Elevator (Farmer's Co-Op)

Spur length	165 ft.
Spots	3
Commodities handled	Grain
Loading facilities	Over track spout
Car types handled	Covered Hoppers

Table 4: The Farmer's Co-Op

Martin built the grain bin from a Rix kit. The remainder of the structure was scratchbuilt from card, plastic sheet and various 'bits and pieces'.

Martin then gave the Co-Op a grey undercoat. He then picked out detail and gave it some rust; "quite a lot of rust" he says. Martin says that he used pictures from the internet to use as a guide.

He says that he still needs to 'plant' the buildings before adding weed growth around the base.



Photo 6: The Farmer's Co-Op buildings

4 Operations

Martin prefers software to assist with operations. His operating sessions are generally short; running for around 30 minutes when he feels like running the layout. He does have other hobbies to keep him entertained.

4.1 Software

Martin uses a Mac program to control car movements on the layout.

"Switchlist provides me with all that I need to run the layout."

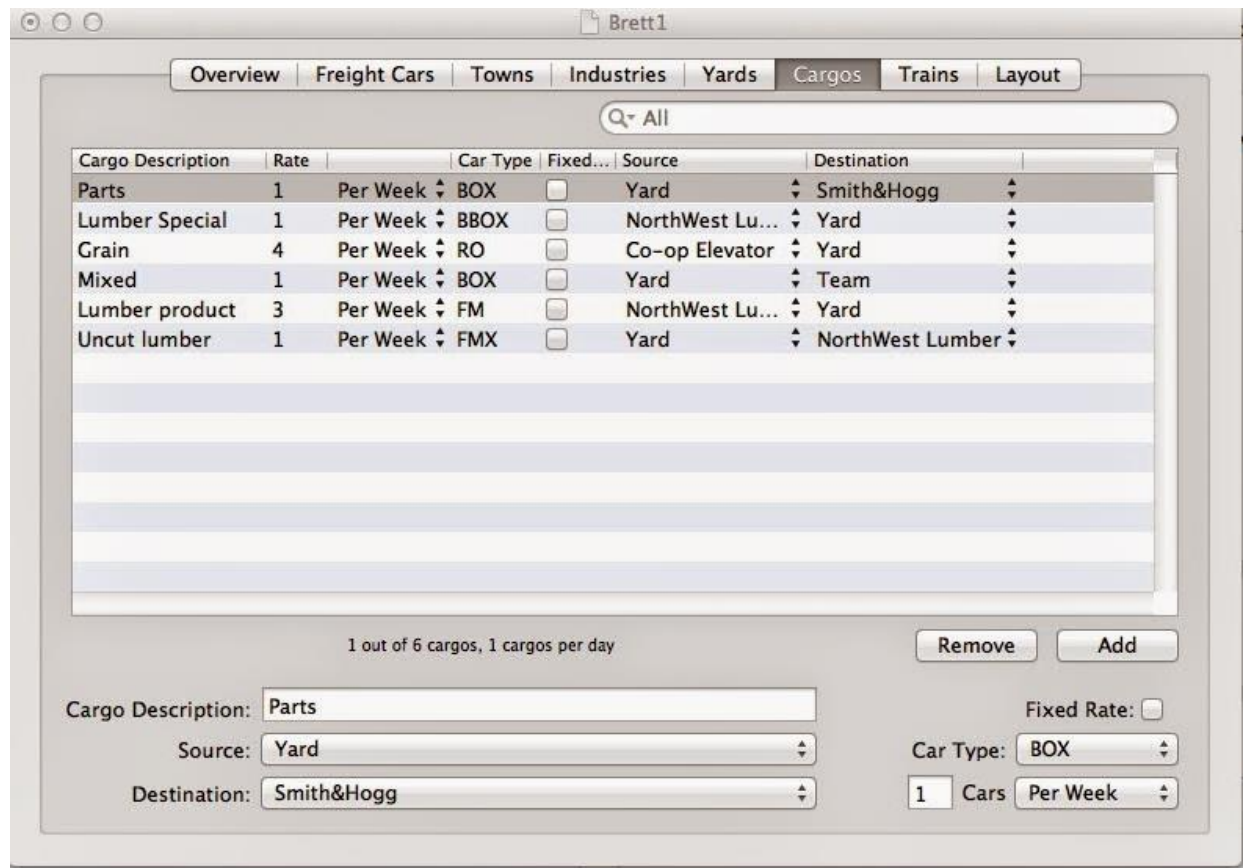
"It provides great reports; I run the layout using a switch list printed straight from the program."

Martin says that he likes Switchlist because it can be modified to give you the paperwork that you feel comfortable using. Martin says that the free program provides him with a lot of flexibility.

"You have to spend some time at the outset setting up your industries; specifying loads, car types and frequencies."

"I keep tweaking it (Switchlist) because I find that I'll get, for example, lots more traffic to the team track than I would expect by comparison to say the lumber business."

"But for free, I'm not complaining."



Screenshot 1: The switch list application showing the Cargos tab

4.2 Staging

Because there is little room for staging on the layout Martin stores all of his stock in a drawer located just underneath the layout.

At the end of a session (when switching is complete), he removes the stock from the fiddle track at the front of the layout leaving everything else where it is.

“The next operating session a switch list is generated and I make up the train (usually three cars) on the fiddle track to start the next session.”

“The storage drawer becomes the 'rest of the world' that stock travels to and from.”

5 Resources:

You can read more about Martin’s layout, and watch switching happen on the layout by using the resource links below.

5.1 Blog

<http://mogtrains.blogspot.com/>

5.2 RMWeb

<http://www.rmweb.co.uk/>

5.3 Videos

Switching Brett - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5OX4RUYwpk>

Yellow Pine 902 switching Brett - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2tZ53lqUiR8>

Subscribe to Martin's channel and hopefully we'll have him make some more videos.

6 Summary

Brett is the kind of switching layout we all want, but maybe we don't know that we need. Simple and speedy to setup; fun to operate and realistic for a shortline in the weeds.

I'd like to thank Martin for his time and patience as I bombarded him with questions as I was writing this article.

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