

# Expanding the Long Island Rail Road, Port Jefferson Branch

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Yes, the LIRR spells the word “railroad” as  
two words

Entrance to Atlantic Ave. Station in Brooklyn

# Some Background

- Current layout started in 1988
- Original layout and first addition are complete
- Models the Port Jefferson Branch of the Long Island Rail Road from East Northport into Pennsylvania Station in Manhattan
- Time is 1964 (or 1954 if I feel like running steam!)

**MTA** Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
**MTA Long Island Rail Road**

**Key**

- Full Time rail station
- Accessible station
- Part Time rail station
- Major Transit Hub

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- I retired last November 1st, after 42 +years of Federal Service
- I humbly requested, and my management agreed, that I could expand my layout into the back half of the finished side of our basement (~10' x 20' space)
- Two main questions: 1.) around the wall or center island? and 2.) what to model?

- I decided upon a center island, which eliminated the need for a duck-under or lift-out bridge in order to access the bathroom

# What to Model?

- I wanted to move an existing freight yard to the new section
- Existing freight yard was at a location of a narrow aisle. Operating the yard was difficult when others needed to pass by
- Saw Car Float Module in Free-Mo layout Exhibit at 2015 MER Convention
- Inspired me to model the LIRR car floats and float bridges in Long Island City. This would provide both an additional modeling challenge and an interesting switching opportunity during operations
- I wanted to install the Faller car system

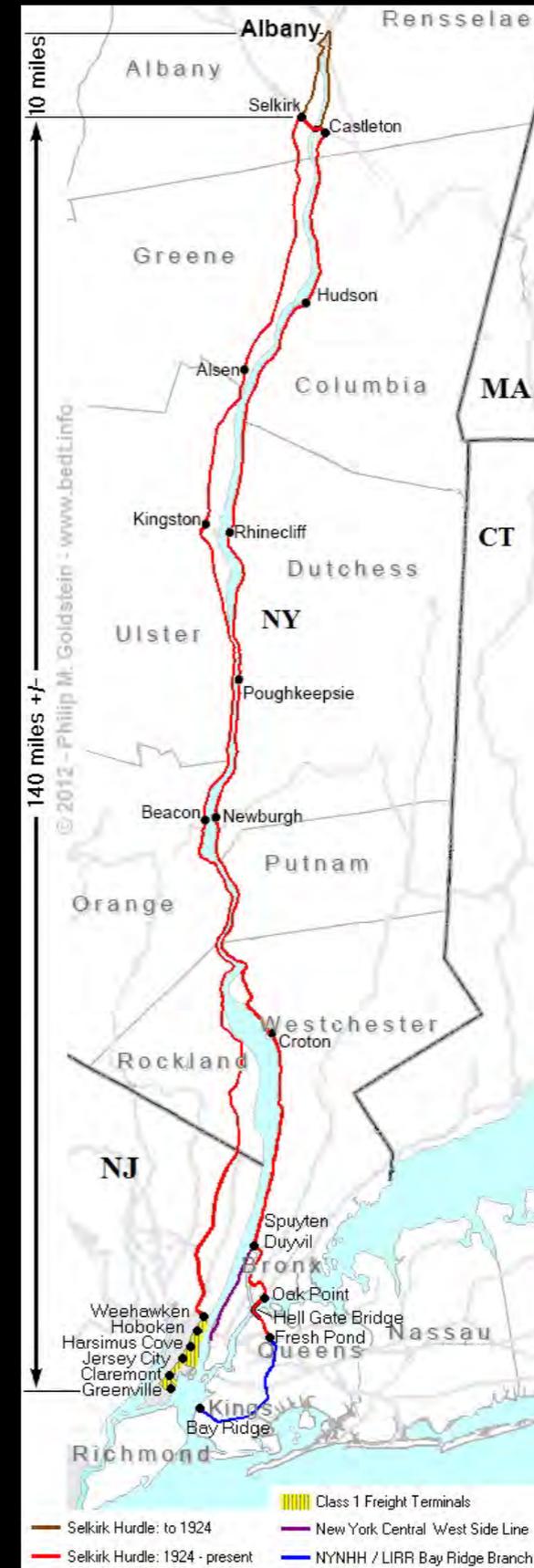


**Car Float Module at Free-Mo exhibit at  
Last Year's MER Convention (NJ Division)**

# What are Car Floats?

- Car Floats are large barges that transport freight cars over water from one port to another
- No bridge existed in the NYC area for freight cars traveling eastbound to cross over from New Jersey to Long Island
- To access Long Island, freight trains had to first head north for 170 miles to Albany, NY, cross over the Hudson River, then travel 170 miles south to cross onto Long Island around the Hell Gate area.

The freight route from NJ to LI before the car floats



- Trains traveled at roughly 40 mph, so the 340 mile round trip took over 8 hours
- This necessitated a crew change, in addition to the extra time and fuel needed
- Thus, transporting freight from NJ to LI via car floats became financially advantageous
- Freight cars were loaded on car floats in New Jersey, and a tugboat would push them across lower New York harbor and up the East River to the car float bridges in Bay Ridge or Long Island City



# What is a Car Float Bridge?

- A car float bridge is the platform that connects the rails from the car float barge to the fixed rails on land
- The East River is tidal, so the float bridge needs to be able to pivot up and down with the tide in order for the rails on the car float to line up with the fixed rails on land
- A good website that discusses car floats in detail is <http://members.trainweb.com/bedt/indloco/developmenttransferbridge.html>











LONG

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# Where to Start?

- I do not like to draw detailed track plans in advance. Plans and ideas change and evolve over time
- I envisioned the extension as essentially a 17 1/2 ft by 5 ft table with a divider/view block down the middle
- Holban Yard would be the focus of one side of the new layout, and the car floats, float bridges, and car float yard would be the focus of other side.
- Track connection to existing layout would be via a hole cut through the wall (right next to door)
- Mainline track would go in a loop around new section and return to existing layout

- Tracks for both Holban Yard and Car Float Yard were first laid temporarily
- Operating sessions usually identify problems, areas for change and/or improvement
- After 1-2 operating sessions, several changes recommended
- Once improvements were made and more experience gained operating the yards, track design was finalized

# Benchwork

- At the end of the last Ice Age, glaciers advanced to North Shore of Long Island, and then began to retreat
- Glaciers pushed earth up in front of them, so North Shore is quite hilly along Long Island Sound. As glaciers retreated, they melted and runoff carried soil and rock south
- Long Island is called a “till plain” (glacial runoff) and, with the exception of the north shore, is flat. Very flat!
- Since the section of the Island I would be modeling was flat, and a majority of the new section would be yards, I opted to lay the track directly on Homosote
- Benchwork is simply 3/4” x 3” and 3/4” x 2” pine boards. Legs are 2” x 2”











- I put 1/8" plywood (flooring underlayment) on the framework (for stiffness), then put the Homosote on top of the underlayment
- Backdrop is 1/8" Masonite, 27" high
- Homosote is painted with Latex paint to seal it. This helps prevent it from absorbing moisture when humidity changes, and reduces expansion and contraction





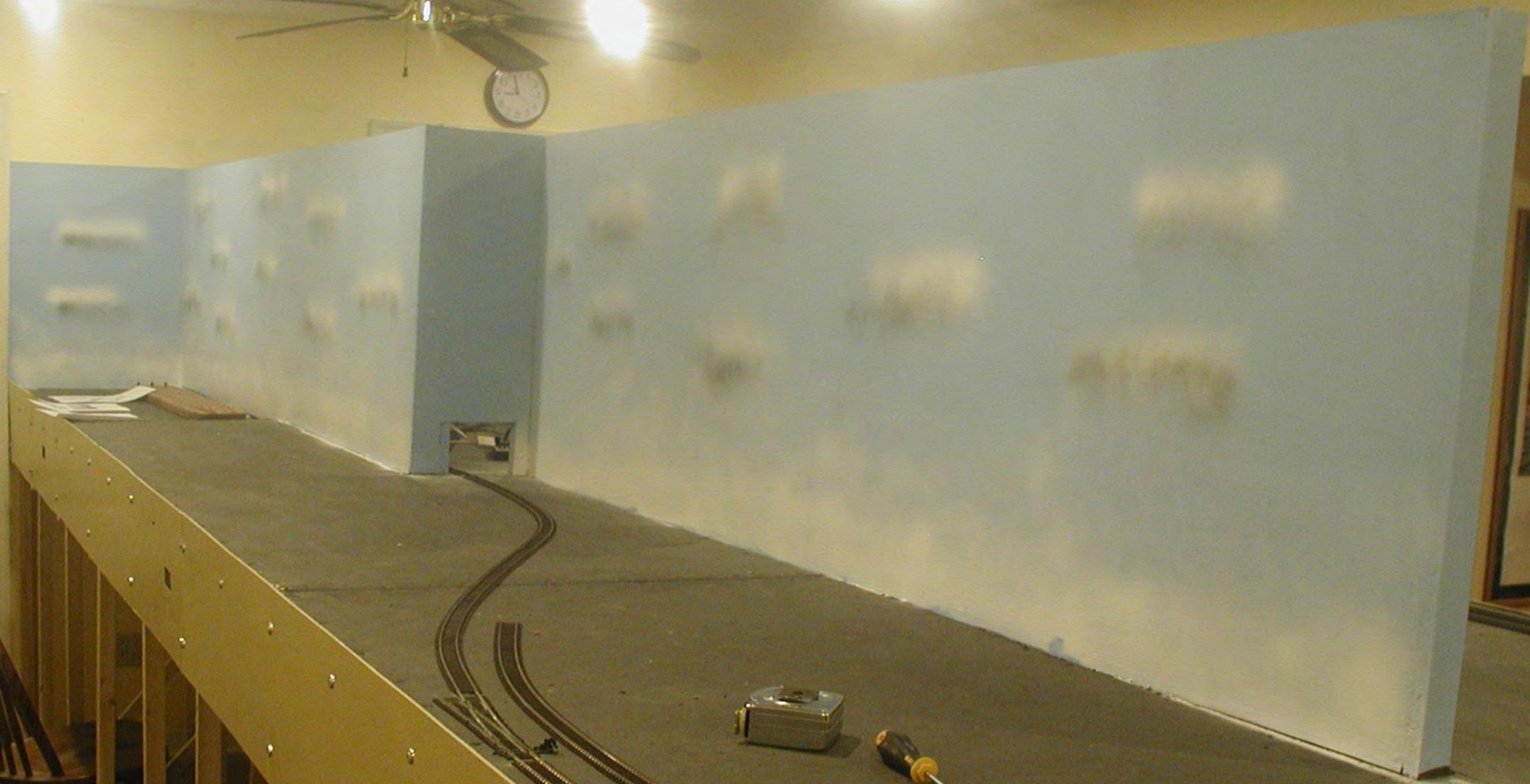


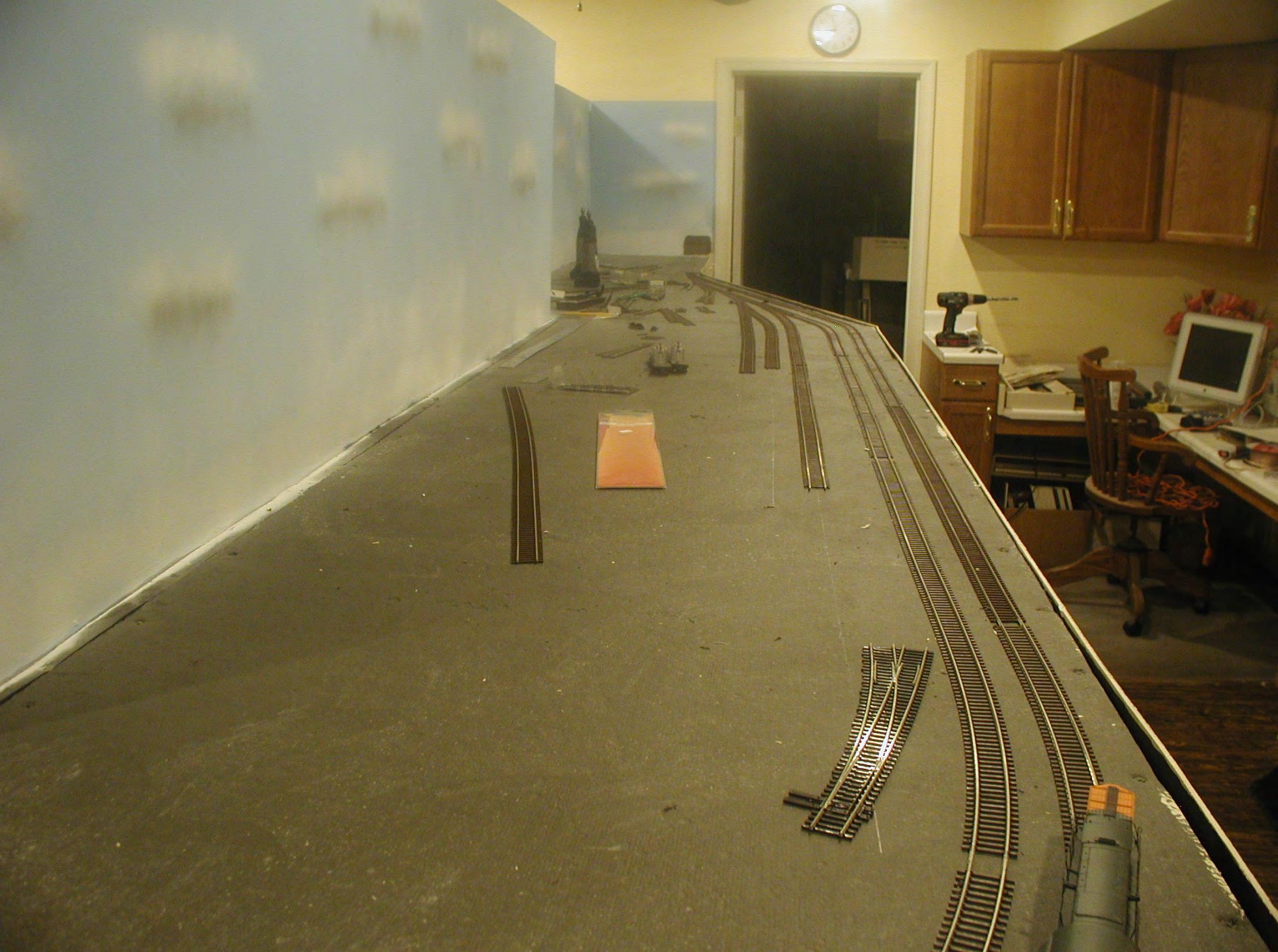






VENTILATION





# Adding the Yards

- I decided to put the Faller car system road behind Holban yard and in front of building fronts and a city backdrop
- This resulted in Holban yard being about 6 tracks wide.
- The car float yard layout was determined once the car float bridges were constructed and located









CARPENTERS  
YARD

# Car Float Bridges

- Walthers car floats and car float bridges are similar to (but not exactly) the ones used by the LIRR at Long Island City
- I connected two car float dock kits together where they meet the shore with a strip of plastic, and with an elevated building between them where the car floats connect
- This stiffens there structure allows me to move both of them together as a unit



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# Tugboat and Idler Cars

- Car Floats are moved by tugboats
- LIRR had a fleet of tugs
- I modeled the LIRR tug “Meitowax” using Walthers tugboat kit
- Again, close, but not exact, model
- (Meitowax comes from “Matouwac”, which means “land of the periwinkle” or “country of the ear shell”)



LIRR Tug "Meitowax" c.1960s





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- Engines could not travel onto car float bridges or car floats due to weight.
- To move cars on and off the car floats, lighter weight idler (or reach) cars were used to “reach” onto the car float bridge and barge, couple up to the freight cars, and pull them off the barge.
- LIRR used modified flat cars, some of which had crew shelters on them



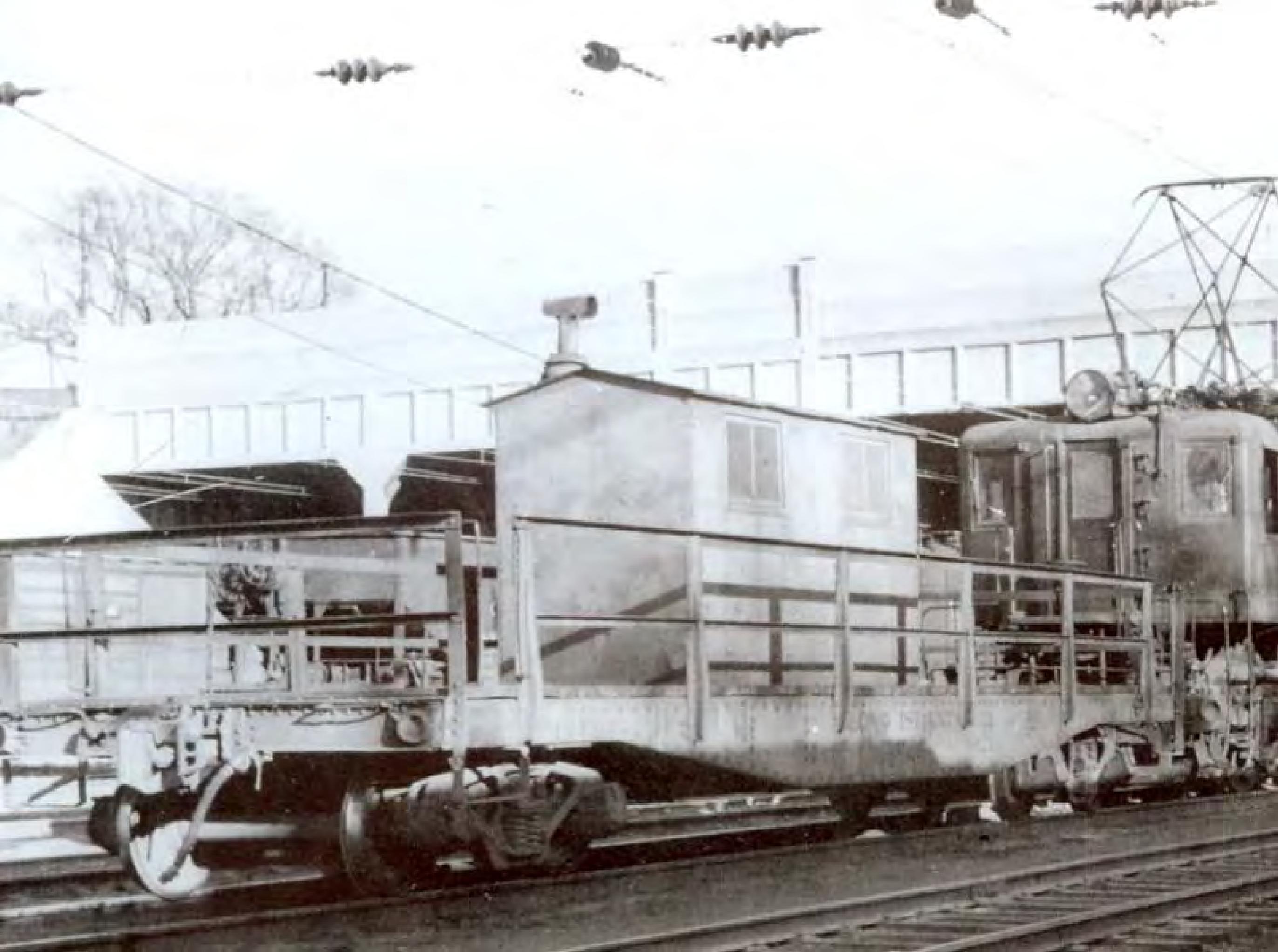


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And yes, accidents do happen on float barges and bridges This is why you don't want to back an engine onto a float bridge!



# Moving Cars on and Off the Barges

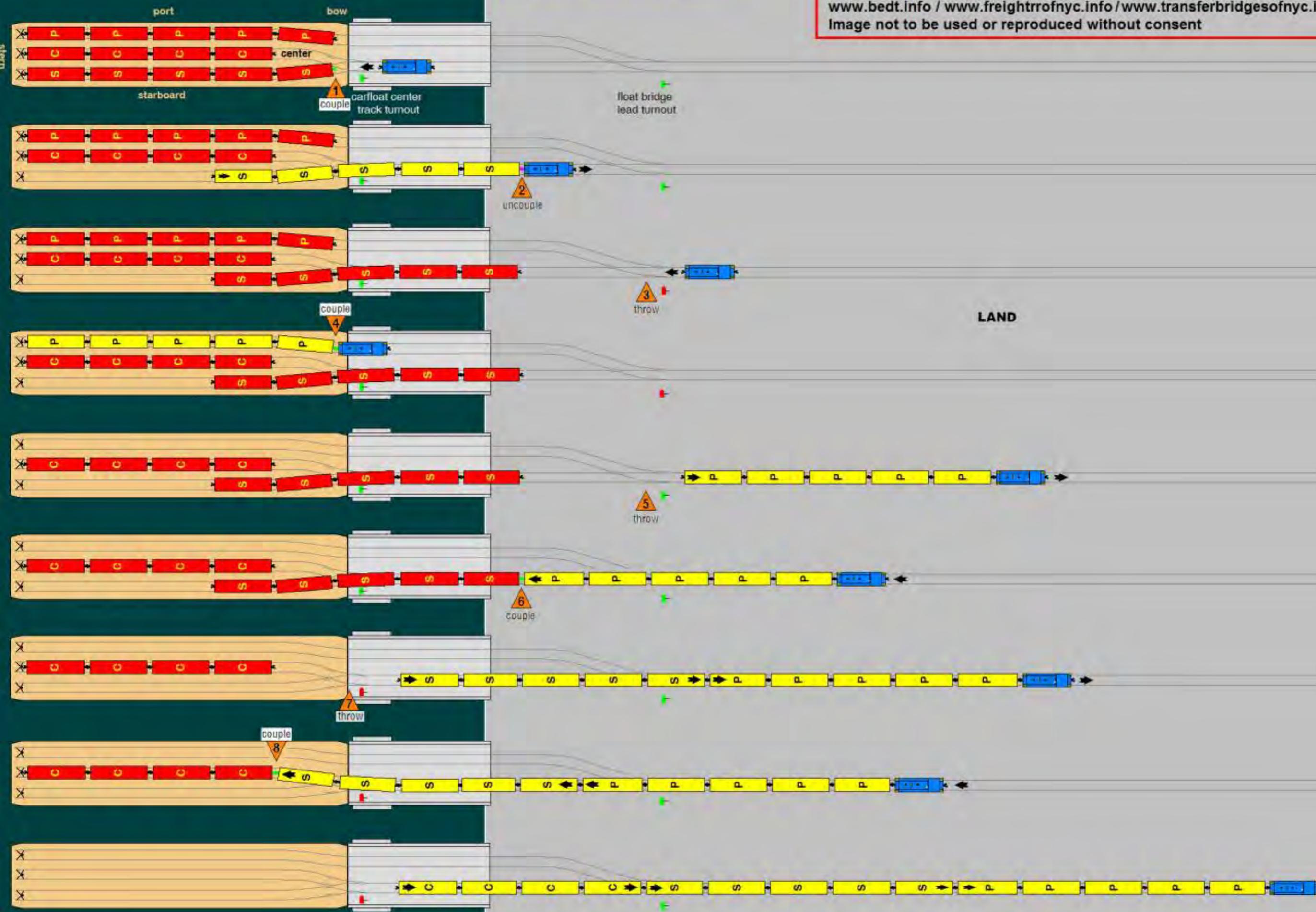
- LIRR barges carried about 16-18 cars on 3 parallel tracks
- Cars had to be put on and taken off of the barges in a specified sequence in order to keep the barge from listing too much

**CARFLOAT**

**FLOAT BRIDGE**

red cars denotes stationary cars  
yellow cars denotes cars in motion

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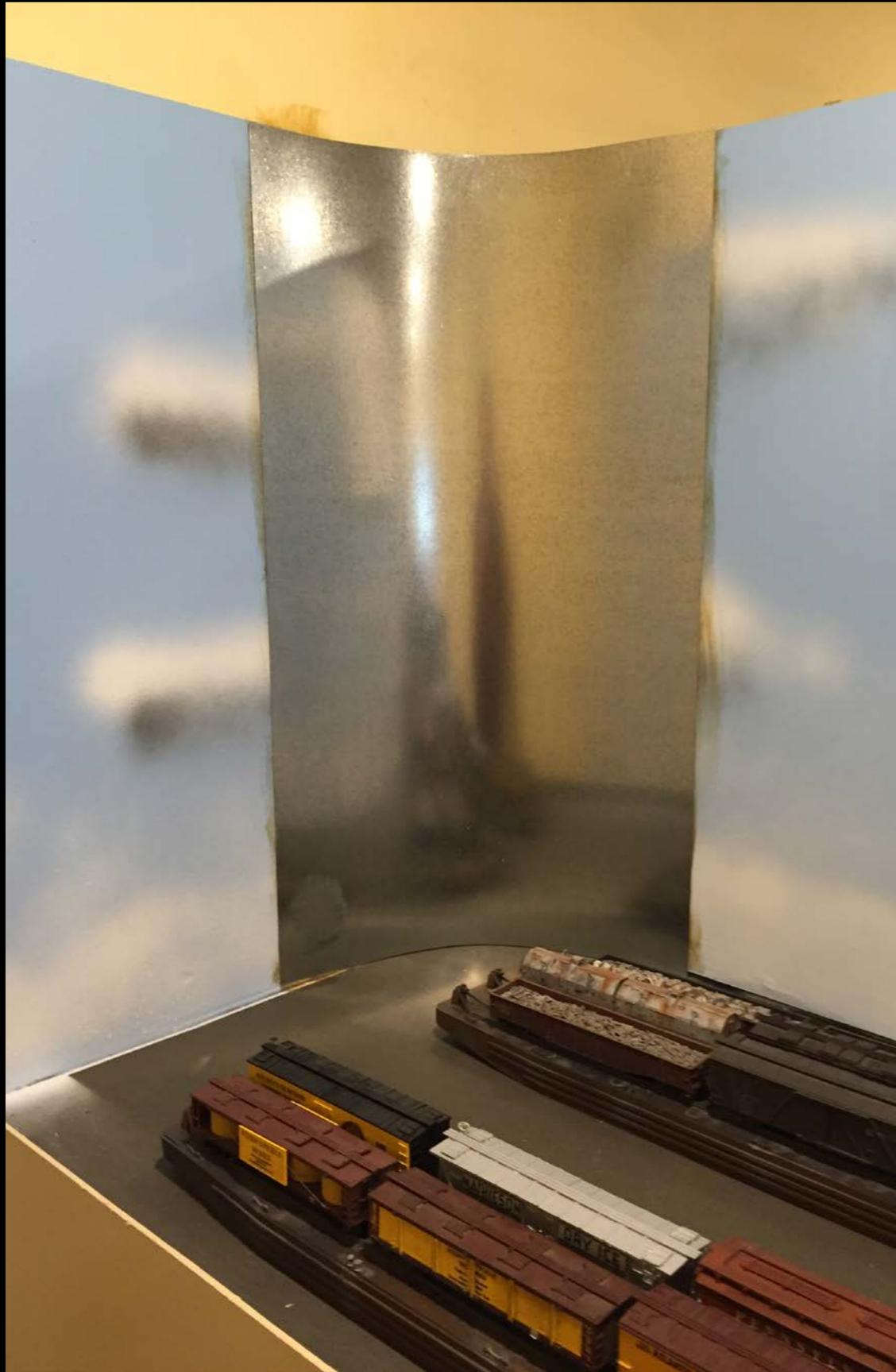
# Backdrop for Car Floats

- A person standing on the car float bridge looking west would see the Manhattan skyline about 1/4 mile away.
- Looking east, they would be looking up the East River and see the 59th Street Bridge
- I found photos of both the Manhattan skyline, and the East River (with the 59th Street Bridge) on the internet, and contracted with “Backdrop Junction” to purchase the photos and merge them into a 73” backdrop that would sweep around the corner where the car floats are

# Installing a Simple Curved Corner

- Purchased an 18" x 36" piece of thin, flexible, ductwork steel at Home Depot
- Formed it into a curve in the corner, marked its location, and glued it into place with contact cement
- Blended edges flush with existing backdrop using drywall spackle, sanded and then painted to blend with sky-colored wall







# What About the Old Holban Yard?

- Decided to make benchwork narrower for easier aisle movement during operating sessions
- Ideal new home to an icing platform for reefers and Stern's Pickle Works





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- Thank you for your attention
- Layout should be open during 2018 MER Convention
- Any Questions?