## 7. Mark Gionet's Salmon Falls River Bridge



Years ago, I saw an image of a Boston & Maine freight crossing the Salmon Falls River Bridge connecting southern New Hampshire and Maine. It was in one of those many photo-heavy railroad books that provide pages of inspirational images. The scene was a layer cake of everything I like to model — wood on steel on stone over dammed up water, all topped by trains. I even convinced my wife to make a smallish detour on a drive from the Maine coast to friends in Massachusetts so that I could see and photograph the bridge in real life. I saved a spot for it on the latest iteration of my layout. I tacked up two photoshopped images of the real spans glued to pieces of foam core to signify "bridge goes here." But layout progress eventually reached that bridge and it was time to cross it.

Bridges are made up of a lot of the same things repeated over a long distance — piers, girders, trusses, rivets, ties. Redundancy creates structural integrity. A multiplicity of small parts means easier construction. Repetition means efficiency and economy. In real life that is. In modeling this means piecing together four separate bridge trusses for each of two spans; sitting at the kitchen table every rainy spring day placing

hundreds of rivet decals on added gusset plates; ripping thousands of scale board feet of eight by eights from stock lumber to fill out the deck and walkways; laying up a styrene stone masonry pier master styrene by block by block before casting multiples in plaster. On a project like this, you can test two or three ways to build something before settling on a preferred approach and still find a place for the discards. With so many of any one thing, who's to notice?



I can't say out hasn't been fun. It's certainly the most complicated structure I've attempted, and easily has taken the most time. I've picked up some new skills and tried out some new products. And hopefully, it's finally close to opening for use. The real party will be seeing it installed and supporting the weight of trainloads of paper, potatoes and people traveling from Portland to parts south. This is my latest project. *Mark Gionet*