

PHOTOS BY WILLIAM SCHAUMBURG

Nick Kalis' HO scale Long Island Rail Road, Lower Montauk Branch

There was more to the LIRR than hauling commuters/**Ben Hom** and **Nick Kalis**

The Long Island Rail Road is primarily known as a commuter railroad, hauling hundreds of thousands of passengers between Nassau and Suffolk counties and New York City every day. However, unknown to the casual railfan and model railroader, the LIRR handled a surprising variety of freight traffic via carfloat at Bay Ridge in Brooklyn for interchange with the New Haven, and at Long Island City in Queens, where it served an assortment of small industries in Long Island City and points east. New York's legacy as a center of manufacturing is forgotten in the bright lights of today's city; industry shaped and defined much of Long Island

City's small industries on and off for 20 years, amassing a library of loose-leaf binders containing track diagrams, photos, articles, and correspondence detailing LIRR operations. This research

paid off in his HO scale Long Island Rail Road Lower Montauk Branch layout. Most people, upon learning that Nick models the Lower Montauk Branch, think of Montauk Point, an idyllic vaca-





...tight clearances and an industrial setting, Nick Kalis' LIRR-inspired layout captures the look of urban railroading (left). A visit to the LIRR's Yard A finds Alco S-2 No. 459 (left) working the "Feeder Job," which is the transfer turn between Yard A and the Street float yard. A diverse collection of industrial customers are located along the north side of Yard A. No. 459 is pulling an empty Atlanta & West Point boxcar from the National Street siding (above). Scenery on this layout means plenty of industrial buildings. In a typical of the area, No. 459 moves a cut of cars in a canyon of brick and steel (below).

tion spot at the east end of the island. Instead, the Lower Montauk Branch is at the west end of the island and takes its name from the Montauk Branch and the description "lower" from LIRR employees. Most folks are unaware that the Montauk Branch ran to gritty industrial areas in Queens. Let's go back to September, 1963, and do some railfanning in the warehouse district of Long Island City.

Modeling the LIRR Lower Montauk Branch

Nick Kalis has always been a fan of urban railroads. As a child growing up in Queens, his only brush with prototype railroads was with the New York City Subway, the Long Island Rail Road, and the Pennsylvania Railroad. This experience made a lasting impression, and one of his previous layouts was an HO scale model whose theme was Sunnyside Yard. (Research for this layout resulted in a comprehensive article on Sunnyside Yard published in the Spring, 1996, issue of the PRRT&HS magazine, *The Keystone*.) When it came time for a new layout, Nick turned again to his childhood memories of New York City railroads. He felt that the New York City Subway and its elevated components were too much of a challenge to model, and he had already



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tried his hand at modeling Pennsylvania passenger operations, finding it beyond his pocketbook, talents, and available space and free time.

Nick came to the realization that he wanted a layout that would be reasonably complete in less than a lifetime. His interest in modeling urban areas and Queens, New York, remained strong. Wanting to focus on freight operations for this layout, Nick selected the Long Island Rail Road Montauk Branch, which he felt could be modeled without undue compression in the space he had available. The layout is set in September, 1963, a transitional period between PRR and MTA control.

A pair of cabooses, or "hacks" as they were known on the LIRR are sitting on the hack track in Yard A (right). With a mix of freight, including some empty hoppers from the LILCO power plant in Island Park, the train works its way to the Sixth St. Yard (below).





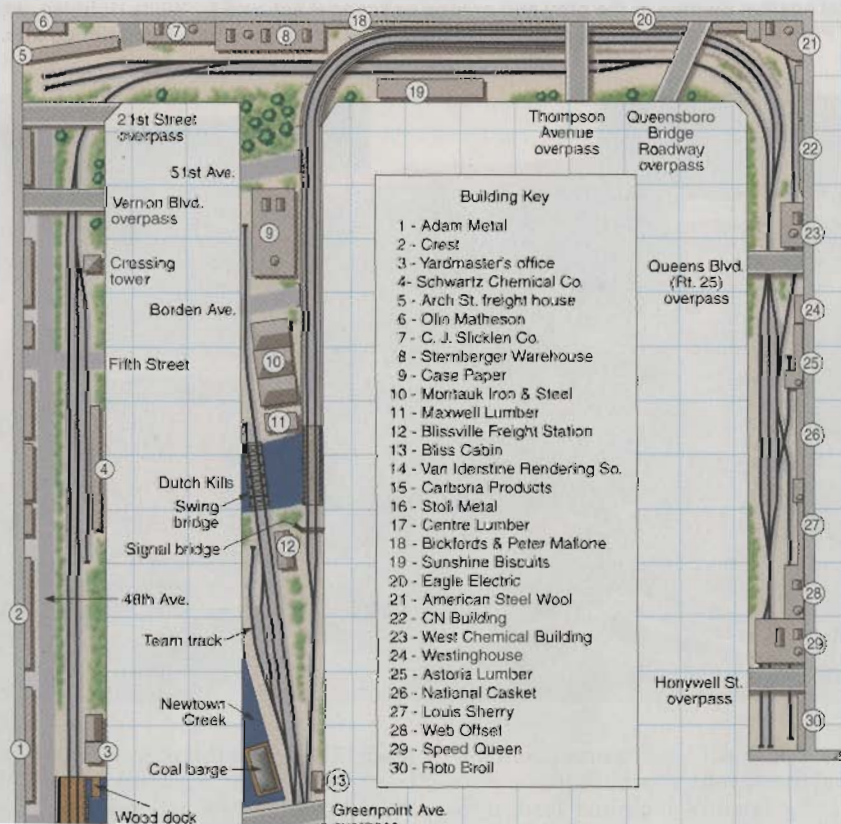
The Feeder Job ducks under the Montauk Cutoff (*above*) as an RS-1 powered passenger excursion passes overhead. On this section of the layout, huge warehouses tower above the tracks, dwarfing the trains. The Montauk Cutoff is normally a freight-only line, so the passage of this passenger excursion (*below*) is a rare event. The locomotive is an Atlas model custom painted in the gray and orange passenger scheme by Willis Hobbies, while the "Ping Pong" combine and coach were assembled from Funaro & Camerlengo kits.



The Montauk Cutoff, a prominent feature of this layout, was built to overpass the Long Island's mainline leading to the Pennsylvanian Railroad's East River

Model Railroads (<http://www.emrtrain.com>), the layout occupies an area of 19' x 14'-3" inches and consists of an

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The layout room was designed by architect Larry Blevins and measures 26' x 14'; it features a built-in workbench, a visitor lounge area, carpeting, central air conditioning, recessed lighting, telephone, and intercom. Nick's last layout was in the unfinished area of his basement, and he learned that a finished layout room was an absolute necessity for enjoying this hobby. The layout is equipped with Digitrax DCC installed by George Hughes, and Ted Tubbesing ably assisted with layout wiring.

Scenery is a combination of kitbashed and scratchbuilt (several by Ed McGill and Master Model Railroader Noll Horan) structures to model the many small industries and warehouses of this neighborhood. Modeling urban scenery demands a busy cityscape, and large numbers of figures, vehicles, and small details such as mailboxes, parking meters, crates, and trash cans give the layout a convincingly cluttered look. Three bodies of water are modeled: the East River, Newtown Creek, and Dutch Kill. Many bridges and vehicular viaducts crisscross the railroad, and these were scratchbuilt or kitbashed from Micro Engineering components.

The float bridge was scratchbuilt by



The Feeder Job follows 48th Avenue as it enters the Sixth Street Yard (left). LIRR 459 works the carfloat using an idler gon (above and below). The float bridge was scratchbuilt by Tony Fabrizi and the tugboat and carfloat were built by retired U.S. Navy captain Christos Zirps.

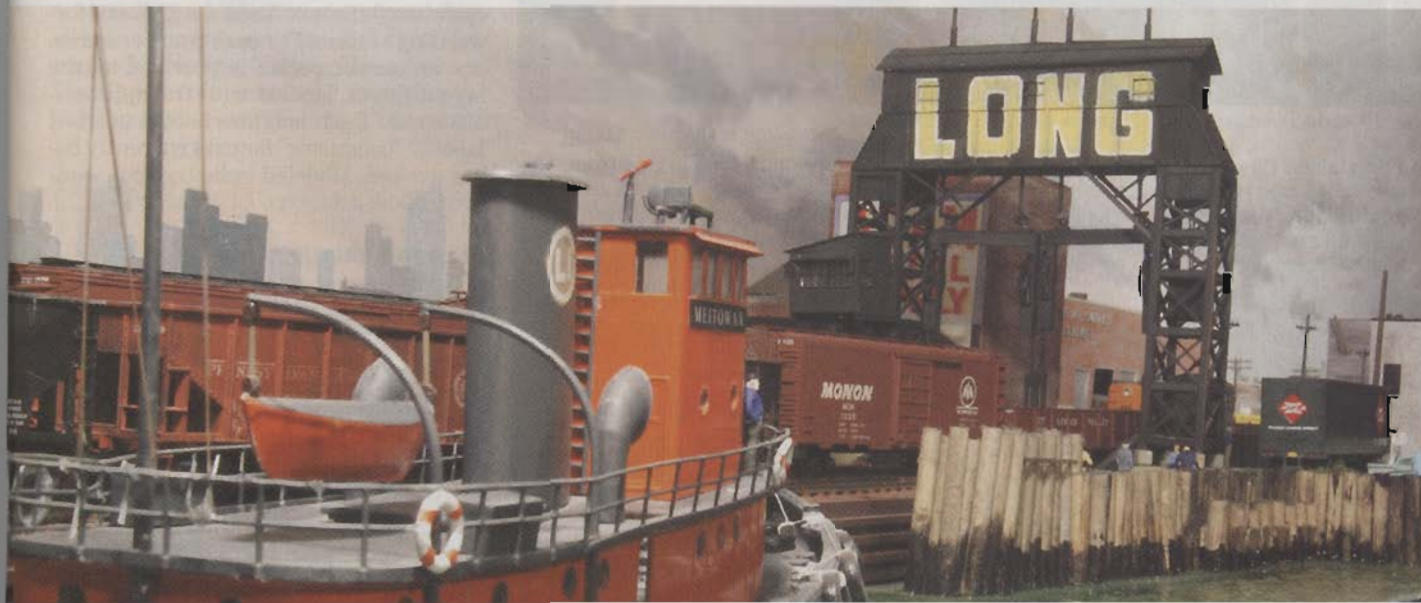
S-1, and Atlas RS-1 LIRR 464 provide power on the Lower Montauk Branch. The distinctive rolling stock of the Long Island Rail Road are represented by Funaro and Camerlengo "Ping-Pong" passenger cars and brass "hacks" (LIRR slang for cabin cars), and a representative fleet of freight cars for the layout's

industries were built and weathered with the help of Brian Sheron, Ed McGill, John Drye, Bill Moesteller and Ben Hom.

Operations

Most traffic on this layout is generated offline. The Long Island interchanged with other roads at Long

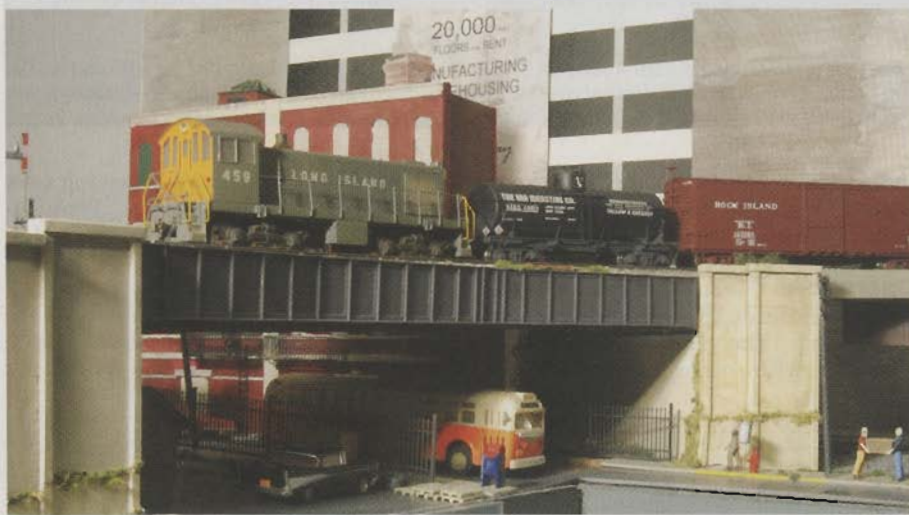
Island City via carfloat, receiving cars from the New York Central, Pennsylvania Railroad, Erie-Lackawanna, Lehigh Valley, Baltimore & Ohio, and New York Dock. The Long Island Rail Road maintained its own independent "railroad navy" until October 31, 1963, when it closed down marine operations



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and transferred its tugs and floats to the Pennsylvania Railroad.

While all LIRR freights ran as extra movements not listed in the timetable, freights did operate on a schedule. Throughout most of the 1960's, most LIRR yard jobs worked seven days a week. On Nick's layout, cars received at Long Island City are pulled from the carfloat and moved via the Feeder Job transfer to Yard A, where they are classified into local freight trains. These trains are MA-6, nicknamed "The Maspeth," the Yard A - Maspeth Turn; MA-7, the Yard A - VD Yard (Flatbush) Turn; MA-8, the Yard A - Bay Ridge Turn, and MA-16, nicknamed "The 16," the Yard A - Pond Turn for Fresh Pond, Bushwick, and New Haven interchange cars. Other jobs on Nick's layout include the Blissville Yard drill ("drill" is the



A Long Island City-bound commuter train crosses the Dutch Kills swing bridge (top). The two-track bridge was scratchbuilt by Nick Kalis. Train MA-8 (above) passes over the Montauk Cutoff bound for Blissville. The Van Iderstine tank car is a Proto 2000 model lettered with custom decals from Great Decals. Further down the line the same train (below) passes Montauk Iron & Steel as it crosses Dutch Kill on the Montauk Cutoff.



LIRR term for a switching job) and the Arch Street Freight House drill.

To add local color to operating sessions, crew members are assigned an engraved clip-on name badge from the callboard with actual LIRR crew member nicknames from the early 1960's documented in Gene Collora's "1966 Was a Time of Change on the Railroad" (*Sema-phore*, April 1991), including "Swine Butt" (MA-16 engineer), "Soup Greens" (MA-8 engineer), "Bat" (MA-6 conductor), "East and West" (MA-7 conductor), and "Broken Arrow" (one of the brakemen).

Old Line Graphics car cards and four-cycle waybills are used as the car forwarding system. For each track or industry, an acrylic pocket is provided on the layout fascia, labeled with the appropriate name. Each neighborhood has a box labeled "conductor" for cars currently being worked. Modeled industry spot numbers follow prototype LIRR practice.

All good things...

Nick has enjoyed working on the Lower Montauk Branch over the last eight years; however, he will be dismantling this layout in anticipation of a move. The Lower Montauk Branch will live on in Northern Virginia, however, as a part of the layouts of Ben Hom and Rick Downs.

Nick is excited about starting an F scale (1:20.5, narrow gauge) Hawaiian narrow gauge railroad layout in his next home. It'll be a great change of