

# *Fall 1987 Baldwin Trophy Winner Earl Smallshaw's Urban Backyards*



It occurred to me when I was modeling my city of Middletown that, when riding on a train, you see mostly the back yards of cities, not usually the most scenic of views. Tenement buildings came to mind along with clotheslines, washing, garbage cans, and residents talking to one another.

When I decided to build these tenements, nothing in kit form, was available at the time. And, not wanting to spend a lot of time on background structures, I used commercially available details where I could. Tenements are usually in a group of two or more. I built three.

These structures are just made of 1/16" illustration board with a series of windows and doors cut in them. What you see is all there is. There is no front or far sides modeled and even the tenements near sides have few windows that can be seen. My motto: "Life is too short, never model what you can't see."

Grandline windows and doors were used for this project. The exterior walls were just painted to represent brick, again because this is a background scene. The real features of tenements are the back porches with railings and staircases. Grandline railings, posts, and stairs were used to fabricate this detail.

Unfortunately, at least at that time, Grandline didn't offer stair railings. I made my own by using the straight section of railing. By firmly gripping the top and bottom rails, then slowly moving my hands in opposite directions, the posts in the railing slanted between the top and bottom rail without breaking. I modified this slant until it matched the angle of the stairs.

Scribed styrene was used for the porch floors and porch roofs. Strips of tissue paper were glued to the porch roofs to represent tarpaper and painted. The remainder of the porch floors, stairway, windows and doors were painted with Floquil coach green and weathered with green and black chalk.

The real features of this scene are the clotheslines and washing. Many modelers think that if you are modeling clothing, you use real cloth, which is grossly out of scale. Besides, bits of cloth at HO scale can't drape the proper way – it's too stiff.

I used aluminum foil for my washing. Painted, it looks like what ever you are trying to portray. It's less than one scale inch thick, close to clothing and sheets, and it can be draped any way required.

Clothes poles should not be of a rigid dowel. I went outside and found small sticks with slight bow to them, much like a clothes pole sags with the weight of the wash over the years. The clotheslines were made from a single strand of braided lamp cord wire, the older, the better. New lamp wire has heavier strands, unsuitable for HO modeling.

Again, these have to be shaped properly. A line, with no washing, forms a gentle arc with the top and bottom ropes parallel. A line with a load of washing, the top rope is straight while the bottom rope sags under the washing load.

An article on the tenements was published in the February 1989 issue of MR. Northeastern Models has made a kit of the three structures with laser-cut wood.