Old-time log buggies

BY E. L. MOORE

Photos and drawings by the author

IF you have wanted to get into logging operations on a more extensive scale, but have hesitated due to the cost of additional equipment, here's how you can build a flock of log buggies for no more than the price of trucks. And not even that if you have several idle pairs around your layout. Any old disreputable ones will do, even those nylon things you have been tempted to discard.

Down in the Florida and Georgia timber country, old-time trucks were linked together in short order by lumber company workmen, and were used without brakes and with only long pole couplers between them. Even then they weren't hill and dale or mainline stuff, but what do you care about the ICC? You make the rules on your pike.

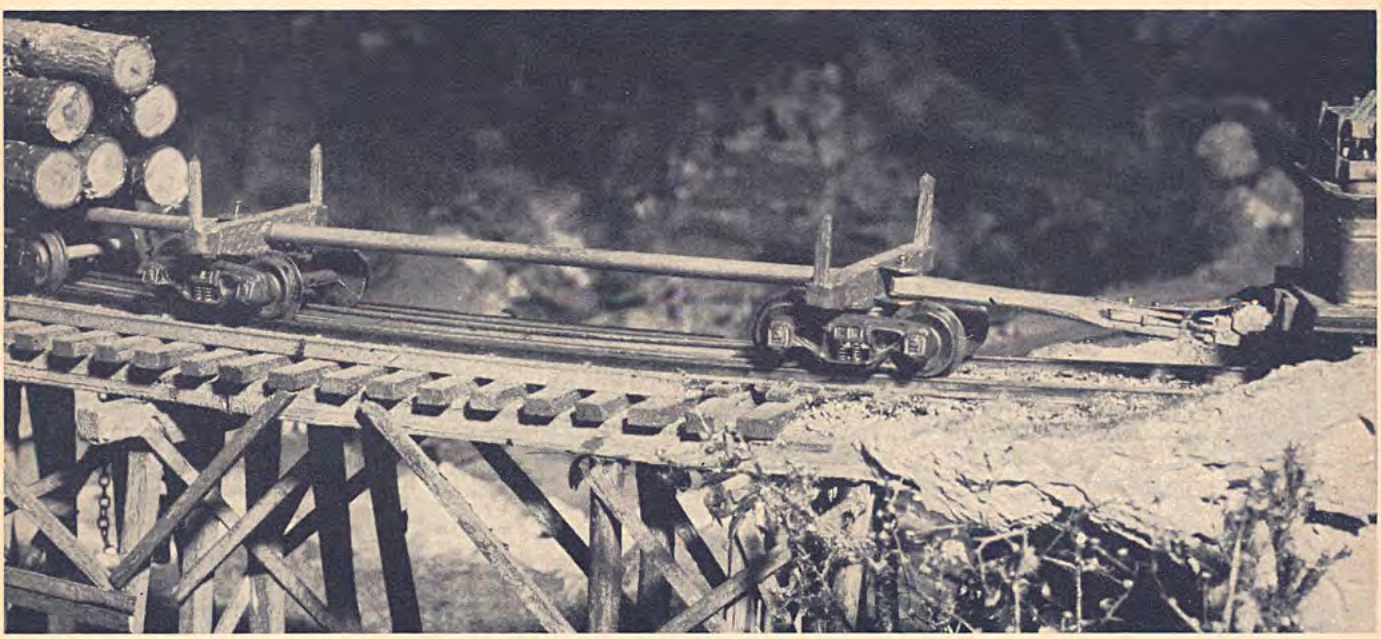
Use the dimensions given with the drawings merely as a guide; you don't have to adhere to them strictly. The drawings show sizes in feet and inches, and though the drawings are twice HO, you can use the rule on page 23 to convert for use in other scales. Use whatever lumber you have on hand, and use it rough. Pine or basswood is good, but if you're working in HO you'll find nothing better than pieces from a free yardstick. I made some of my bolsters from a kite brace just because it happened to be the size I wanted.

The actual construction is as simple as it looks. Shape up the bolsters, A, notch each end to take stakes (I used toothpicks for these in HO), fit them snugly and cement in place. Use postcard stock or thinner to represent the sheet iron that is wrapped around each end of the bolster.

Drill a hole up from the bottom of each bolster at the exact center, using a No. 53 or 54 drill (for HO); insert a 1/16" self-tapping screw, the same kind most often used in attaching ordinary trucks. Or, if you don't have screws like that, use any small screw that will work, making the entering hole just large enough to hold it tightly. Don't screw it all the way in as the bolster must turn. If you have small brass washers, put one between bolster and truck.

Drill another hole of the same size in the face of the bolster; center it as shown in B. This will take the center pole, D. I used 30-foot center poles. You'll be tempted to use 1/8" doweling, which will be all right because with logs loaded the center pole won't show anyway. But I whittled down pine, sanding it a little, until it was roughly (and not always too straight) 9" thick. Next I cut the ends down with a razor blade and fitted them into the holes in the bolsters. Cement them in, making sure both bolsters ride evenly. The HOn3 carts shown in the photo at far right were made with 15-foot center poles. Depending on the length of the coupling pole used, they'll still drag 25- or 30-foot logs. Use the length that suits you.

Next comes the coupler pocket, E. I used thin brass (heavy shim brass) and cut it to the shape and size shown. You can get a pretty good idea of how it should be attached from the photograph of the empty buggy. Drill a hole through the top and bottom after bending to shape, and use either a lill (small pin) cut to length or small brass brads for coupling pins. Attach



Closeup of HO logging buggy without load. Note first coupling pole with Kadee coupler for connecting to the tender.

this to the bolster with Goodyear Pliobond or any other metal-holding cement.

All that remains now is the coupling pole, C. Make this more or less round, about the same thickness as the center pole, but flatten it slightly at the ends where the holes are drilled. Although 30-foot coupling poles were frequently used, thus accommodating quite lengthy logs, I found that 12-foot, or at most 15-foot, poles looked better. They should swivel freely and not bind in the coupler pockets.

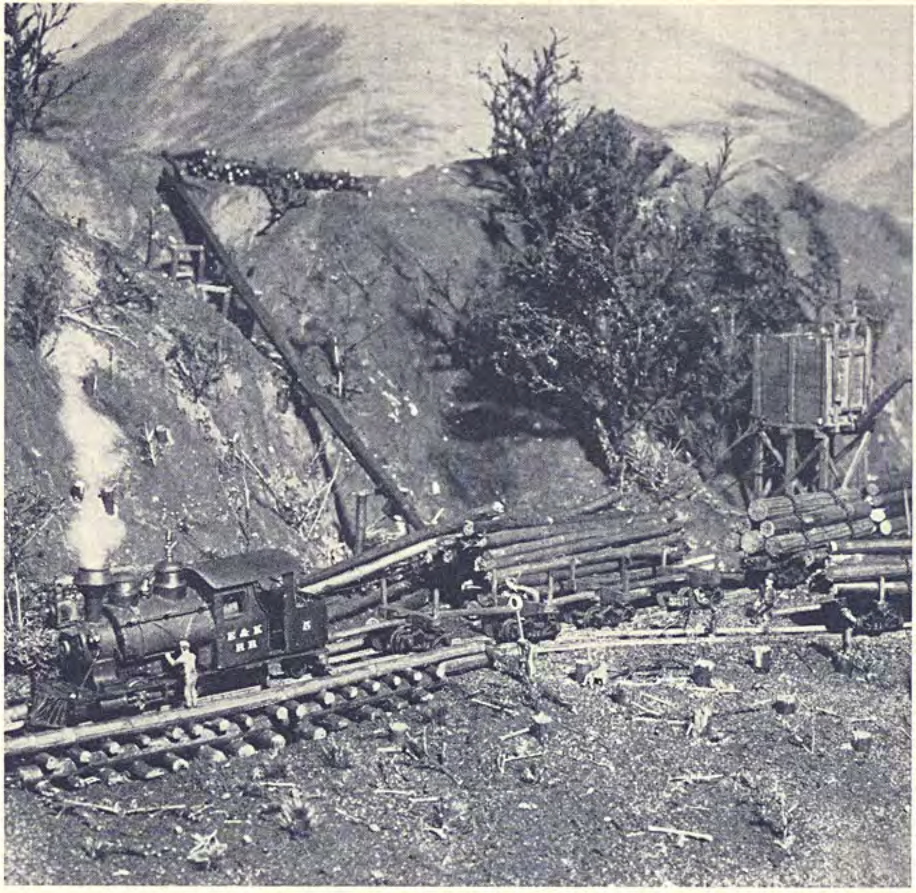
You'll need at least one coupling pole of a different sort — one end of it, that is. Notice in the photo on the opposite page that I've slipped a Kadee coupler in the end of the pole behind the tender. You'll need one or two like this, using your favorite coupler, to connect up to your engine.

That's about all except for the paint job. I used Floquil's walnut stain on all the wood, but of course any dark stain will do.

You might want to give the metal ends of the bolster and coupler pockets a rusty look, and while we're at it, let's not spoil the effect by having glossy black, new-looking trucks. Mix some red and green paint together (I used coach green and boxcar red) until you have a rusty red mixture. Slap this on the trucks and wheels and any other metal parts. It may seem odd to mess up fine metal Central Valley trucks this way, but you're doing it for a realistic effect. Make them look as disreputable as you can. Then pile on your logs. Use chains or not; it doesn't really matter.

It's a good idea to hide a slug of solder or lead down among the logs to give the loaded buggies extra weight. This will cut down on derailments.

You should be able to make two or three buggies in an evening, and soon you'll have all you need. Just one note of warning: Be sure you know the kind of logs you cut for your loads. Mine cost $16.50 — two trips to the doc plus prescriptions. Blisters from my elbow to my wrist. Poison ivy, he said. I believe him!



HOn3 logging buggies on this link-and-pin line have only 15-foot center poles.