



A Different Way to “Paint” a Laser Cut Wood Kit **By Brad Philbrick**

I went to pick up my dog, a female Springer spaniel from the dog groomer; too early, she was not ready yet from her time at the doggie day spa and so I had some time to kill.

How nice it was that a Michael's craft store was close by. It would be fun to browse, and I always could use a few new brushes, some acrylic paint, or some glue. I'd find something to buy.

Well I was having a great time looking around. My body somehow found its way over to the art department. Something there really grabbed my attention. It was a closeout sale on a package of oil pastels. Oil pastels, hmhhh. That was interesting and had me thinking. I have ruined some laser wood kits because I had warped the wood. Dilute acrylic paint as a stain surely did not work. Nor was I pleased in spraying the wood first with primer. The primer caused the wood to lose detail, especially for an N scaler like me. Using alcohol based stains, like India ink and alcohol, one would still have to be careful and watch for warping. Even enamel paints could cause the wood to ripple. And yes, I glued scrap pieces of wood to the backside of a wooden wall to lend support and not cause the wood to curl. That surely helps, but that was never a guarantee either. I found pressing the newly painted wood with some kind of weight worked the best.

My mentors in the hobby and who are from our CID have helped me tremendously. Matt Hewitt and Tom Fitzsimmons would say, “Brad, experiment...try something new and see if it works for you; you simply have to jump in!” OK, so I am going to buy those oil pastels. Matt and Tom were not with me at Michael's, but I heard them speaking to me!

I have had phenomenal success! Oil pastels are much like a very soft crayon. You apply the pastel to the wood and then rub the color in with your fingers. Use multiple colors to give a weathered, dirty, or faded look. As my model railroad friends told me...experiment! I did a coal mining tibble and it worked out great. I was very pleased.

This new found discovery had to be shared. I had to tell of this new way to “paint” wood. It's time for the GTE show. Sunday I brought along my pastels, a laser cut wood kit, and a couple pieces of scrap wood. Matt Hewitt saw it and liked it. “I'm going to get and try some of those,” he went on to say. I went up to Keith Clark, whose profession is an art teacher and a great modeler, and said, “So what do you think?”

Keith right away liked them too. Before I could even mention the key benefit, the art instructor stated, "No warping of the wood!" Tom Cain tried them and so did Rich Seymour. Rich wants to use them on his railroad crossings, great idea. Keith suggested that I always rub the colors in vertically and not horizontally, it makes for a more realistic look. Thank you Keith, a great point.

Someone asked that since it is oil based product, would wood glue still work? I have used white glue, carpenter's glue, and canopy glue all with great effect and no problems with adhering of wood together.

Al Kohut said, "Gee Brad is really into it. He should write an article for The Rusty Spike." And so here it is, an idea that surely is worth giving a try. I do suggest doing this on wax paper, even though it is not paint, the pieces of pastel can crumble or come off the wood as you rub your pastels into your model.

Go and buy yourself some oil pastels if you have some wood to paint or stain on your railroad. It's easy, it's fun, great results, little mess, and no warped wood.