

MADE IN THE NER: Old & Weary Car Shop

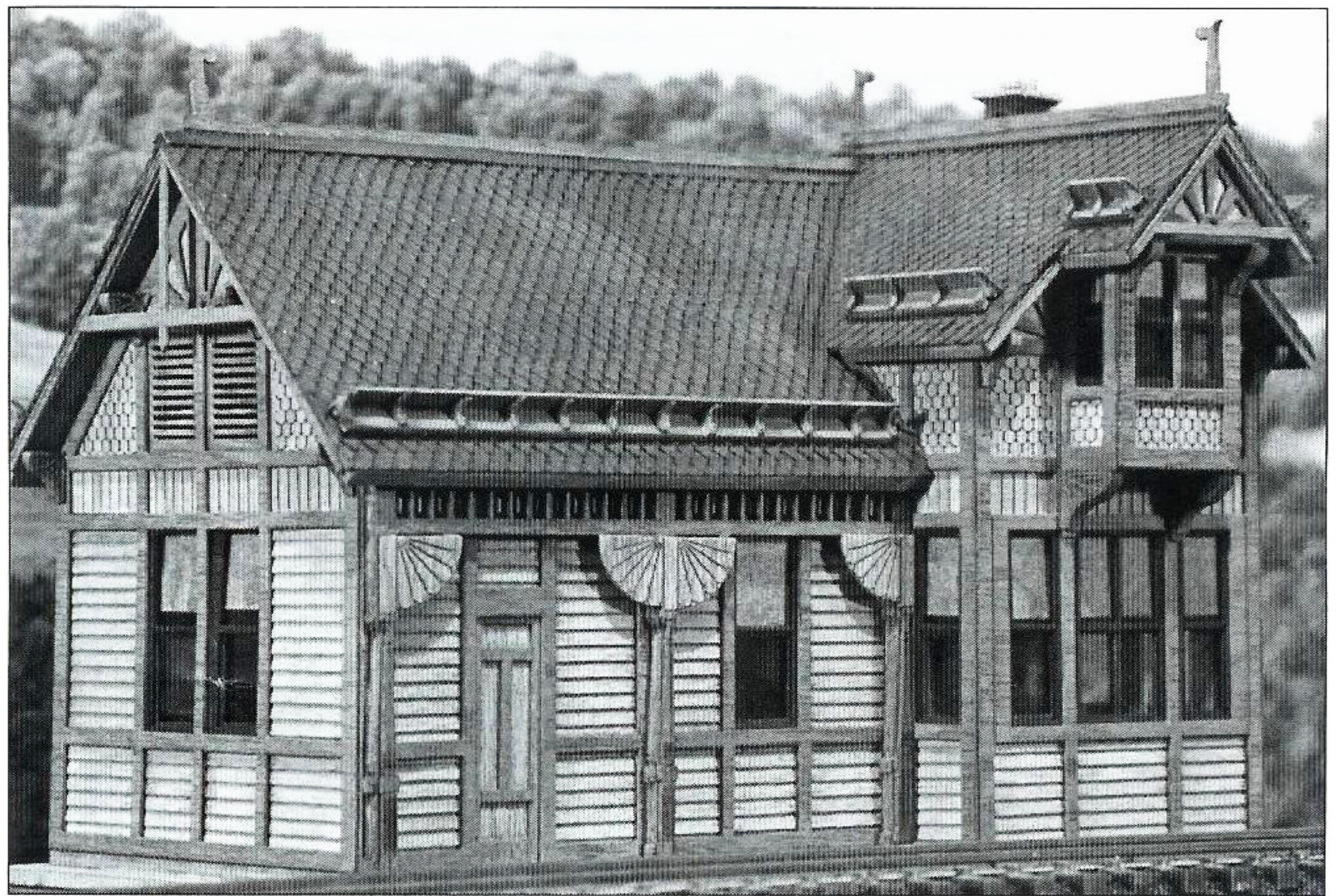
By Barry Abisch
Metro North Division

When Allan Seebach set out to produce a model of a New York, West Shore & Buffalo “Plan 5” station, the only way he could get it exactly right was by doing it backwards. The Plan 5 station is the latest product from Seebach’s Old & Weary Car Shop. For more than 20 years, Seebach has made car kits and small structure kits for modelers interested in the New York, Ontario & Western Railway, which made its final revenue run in March of 1957. But the new station model became a “personal project” for Seebach.

Seebach grew up in Tappan, New York, not far from the New Jersey border. The New York Central’s West Shore Division ran past his boyhood home. Young Al’s playground was a rail yard where O&W cabooses and other equipment were stored to await the scavengers and salvagers. During its lifetime, the O&W had operated over the West Shore, stopping at West Shore stations, between Weehawken and Cornwall, where it took to its own tracks through the Catskills and on to Scranton and Oswego.

The Tappan station – built in 1883 following the West Shore’s Plan 5 design – was still standing while Seebach was growing up. But by the time Seebach was in business and able to recreate the station, all that was left was a basic floor plan and a few photographs. Only when fellow O&W historian and author Bob Karig showed him a copy of an 1885 “Carbuilders Encyclopedia” did Seebach find the details he needed to add the Plan 5 station to his company catalog. One problem: the layout of the West Shore station at Tappan was reversed to fit the terrain and track alignment. So Seebach had to flip the plans, and now produces the model in two versions: one for Tappan, and the “correct” version for other stops along the line.

With the designs in place, Seebach turned to Branchline Trains (another “Made in the NER” business, based in East Hartford, Conn.) for the actual production



ABOVE: The “NYWS&B Plan 5” passenger station kit project grew out of Allan Seebach’s childhood growing up along the New York Central “West Shore” in Tappan, New York. The New York, Ontario & Western had track-age rights over the West Shore from Cornwall to Weehawken, New Jersey (though NYO&W trains did not stop at Tappan). **BELOW:** Allan Seebach in his Old & Weary Car Shop retail location in Tappan.

of the laser-cut kits. The kit ran through four revisions before Seebach was satisfied. He then turned his focus to the instructions. “I try to make the instructions as good, if not better, than the models,” Seebach said.

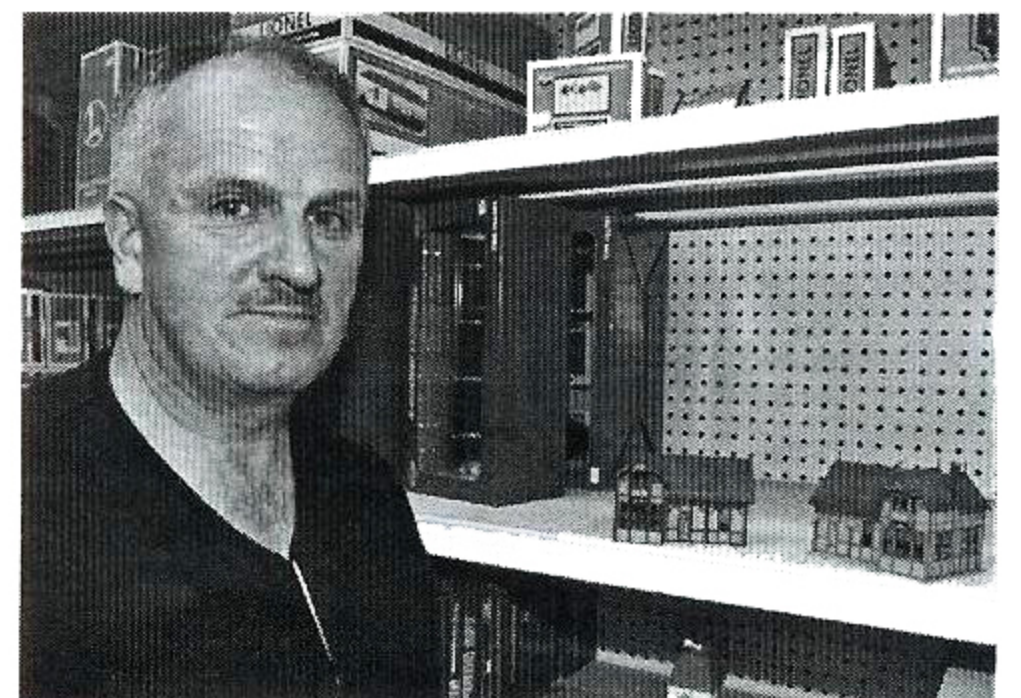
The research that went into the Plan 5 station reflects Seebach’s interest in the history of the O&W. Seebach joined the New York Ontario & Western Historical Society in 1984, two years before he opened the Old & Weary Car Shop in his home. He has been active in the Society ever since, currently his is vice president of the Society and vice chairman of the Board of Trustees. Among other achievements, Seebach was instrumental in developing the Society archives, one of the largest collections of its kind in the country.

History remains the heart of Seebach’s business. Indeed, a few years ago he was honored by the O&W Historical Society for 20 years of service to preserving the history of the railroad through his Society activities and his business.

In common with many of the small man-

ufacturers who support model railroading, Seebach also operates a hobby shop. Seebach’s family owned a nursery which also housed a train store. In 2000, his father and uncle retired and closed both businesses. So, in 2001, Al Seebach opened his own retail shop in a local strip mall, where he also moved the base of his manufacturing business. The impetus for his kit business is the shortage of prototype models for fans of the O&W, Seebach says. Among other models, he has produced kits for O&W Series 8300 cabooses, hopper cars and lineside structures.

As demonstrated by the research that went into the Plan 5 station, Seebach is in no rush to add products at the expense of historic accuracy – even if it means doing some things backwards. ■



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