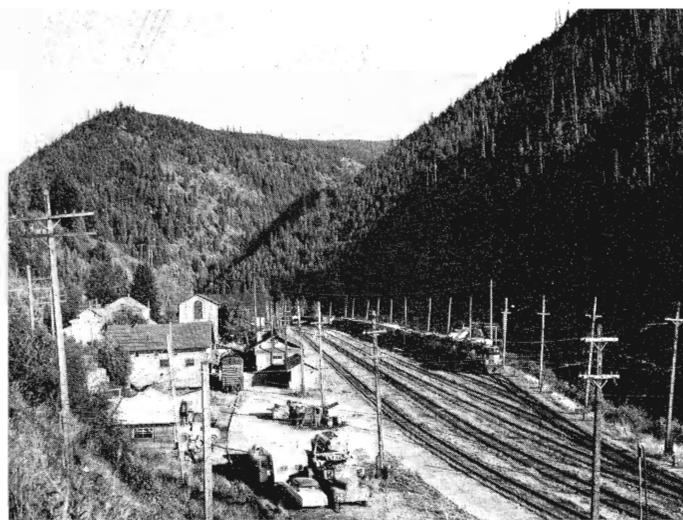
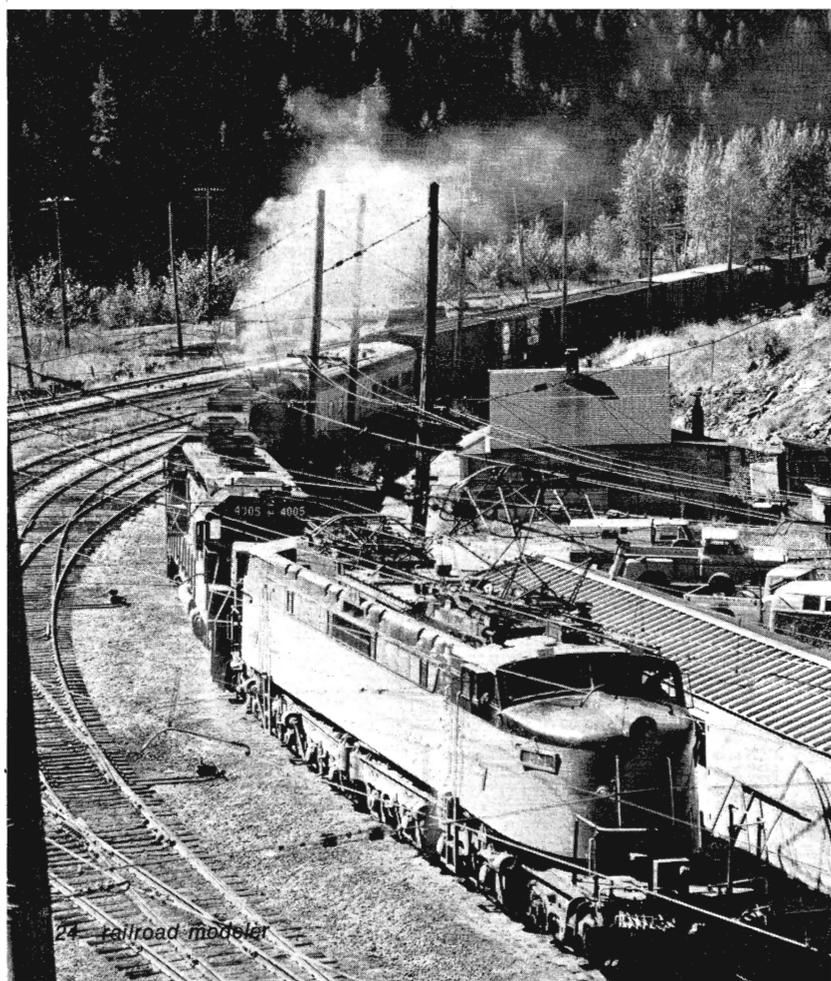
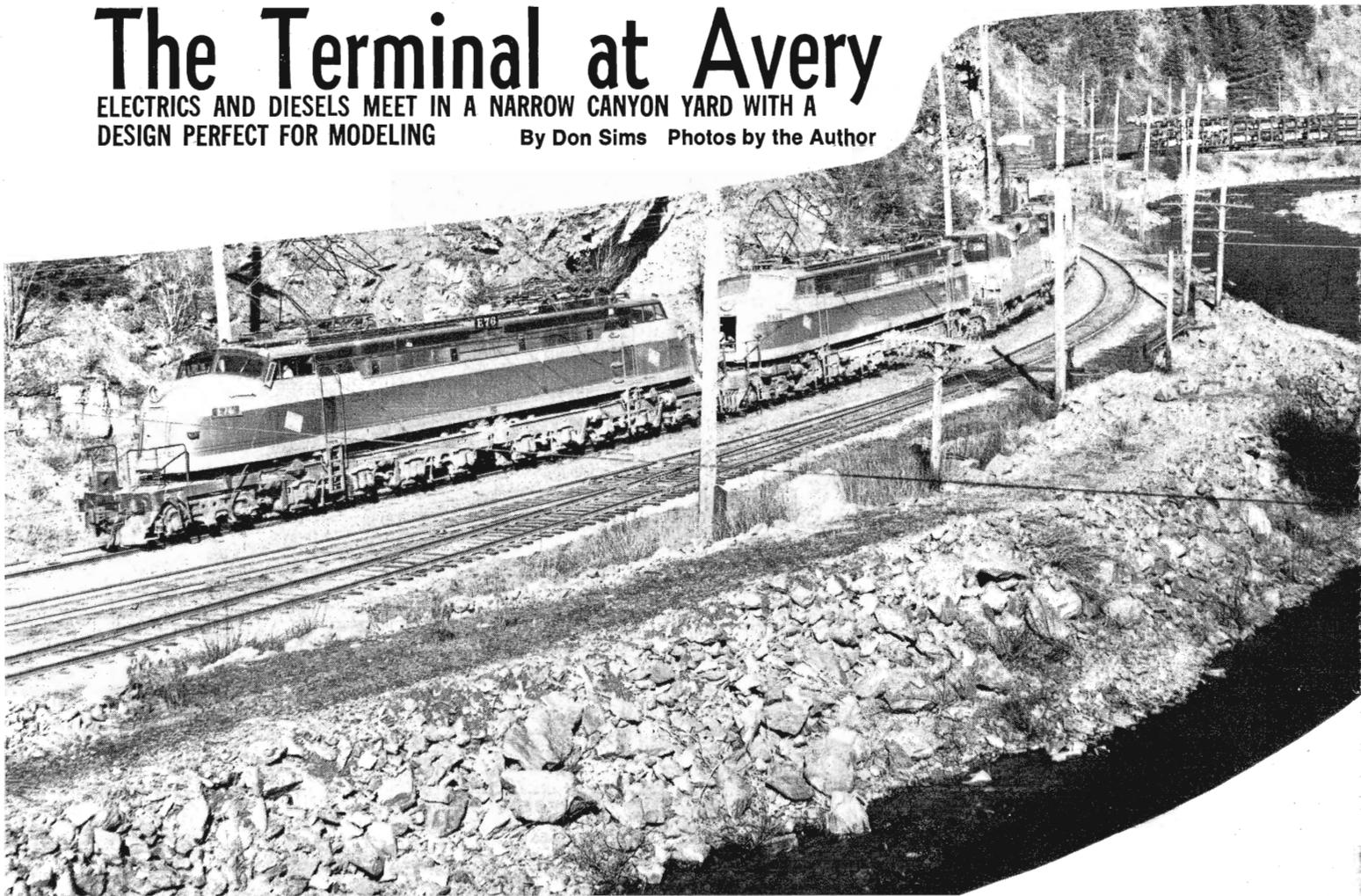


The Terminal at Avery

ELECTRICS AND DIESELS MEET IN A NARROW CANYON YARD WITH A DESIGN PERFECT FOR MODELING

By Don Sims Photos by the Author



The steep canyon walls that make the terminal and yards such a tight affair rise very fast and land is at a premium with the roads and tracks sharing space with the river.

Running through what space is left for a town in the tiny scar known as Avery, an electric locomotive leads a pair of diesels and a private car on an eastbound hotshot.



Following the river that gives the Avery Terminal its strange shape, a pair of Little Joes provide the needed help to get a freight into the yards from the east.

Of all the lodgments on Milwaukee Road's Rocky Mountain electrification project none occupies more of a picturesque canvas than a tiny gash in the mountains that's listed on the timetable as Avery. Here the electricity poled over from Harlowton comes to a halt and the last inch of copper catenary wire is to be found a few hundred feet beyond Avery's westernmost switch target. As a crew change point and junc-

tion between the carrier's Coast and Rocky Mountain Divisions, the tiny terminal's selection was based upon a need to bring in helper power to aid eastbound runs up a stiff mountain grade. It also happens to be the only half-way wide spot near the foot of the grade, and along the mountain-studded Idaho-Montana border such acreage is a precious commodity.

Sadly, Milwaukee Road is closing the book on its electrification, gradually choking off the generators because the system has become uneconomic. First it was the coastal segment, now the Rocky Mountain section is slated to be scrapped. Equipment is elderly, worn out, and moneymen can't discover any wisdom in a complete rebuilding when diesel power comes with a lower price tag, makes its own electrical brew and can run through without

the necessity of power changing. Actually for several years the electricians have really served as auxiliaries, tied onto the point of through schedules for a boost, or left to handle the heavy tonnage drags whose timeliness was a matter of convenience.

A last minute reprieve just might be in order with the current fuel shortage pushing its way across the transportation industry but it rates a long shot.

Without fear of contradiction it can be stated that Avery's railroad personality has to be unique on today's rail scene, only its life span is in question. Electrification on this side of the Atlantic is in itself a scarce commodity but when you combine it with a light density rail line—normally three trains a day each way—along with an early 20th century setting you have a highly desirable



The power generating station at Avery is a large brick structure typical of many seen along the Milwaukee Road's electrification district. Unfortunately their future is almost nil at this writing.

A bird's-eye view looking upstream with catenary everywhere. Eastbound trains disappear around the curve to the left, beyond the generating station.



terminal that fits just about anyone's concept of modeling.

Though our discussion will involve Avery as it looks now, in terms of a juice-diesel era, little changes if the pattern is altered to pure diesel or for that matter a steam-electric age. Past, present or immediately

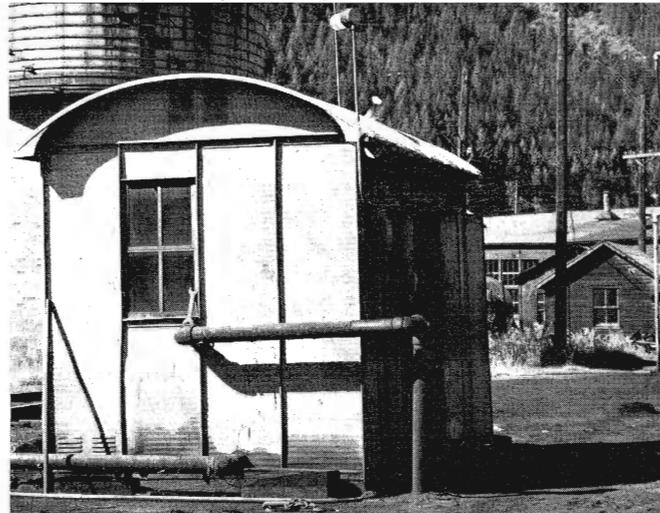
future, this backwoods terminal should twist your imagination.

Sitting amid the western foothills of the Bitterroot Range, approach to Avery is an achievement in mountain railroading. A small stream, the St. Maries River penetrates the foothills and the railroad makes its ap-

proach to the main barrier along this watercourse, which is mildly curving. This is part of the widely recognized gap which existed between the Rocky Mountain country and Othello, Wash., where the coastal wire was strung. As it happens this non-juice segment was a fatal decision, re-

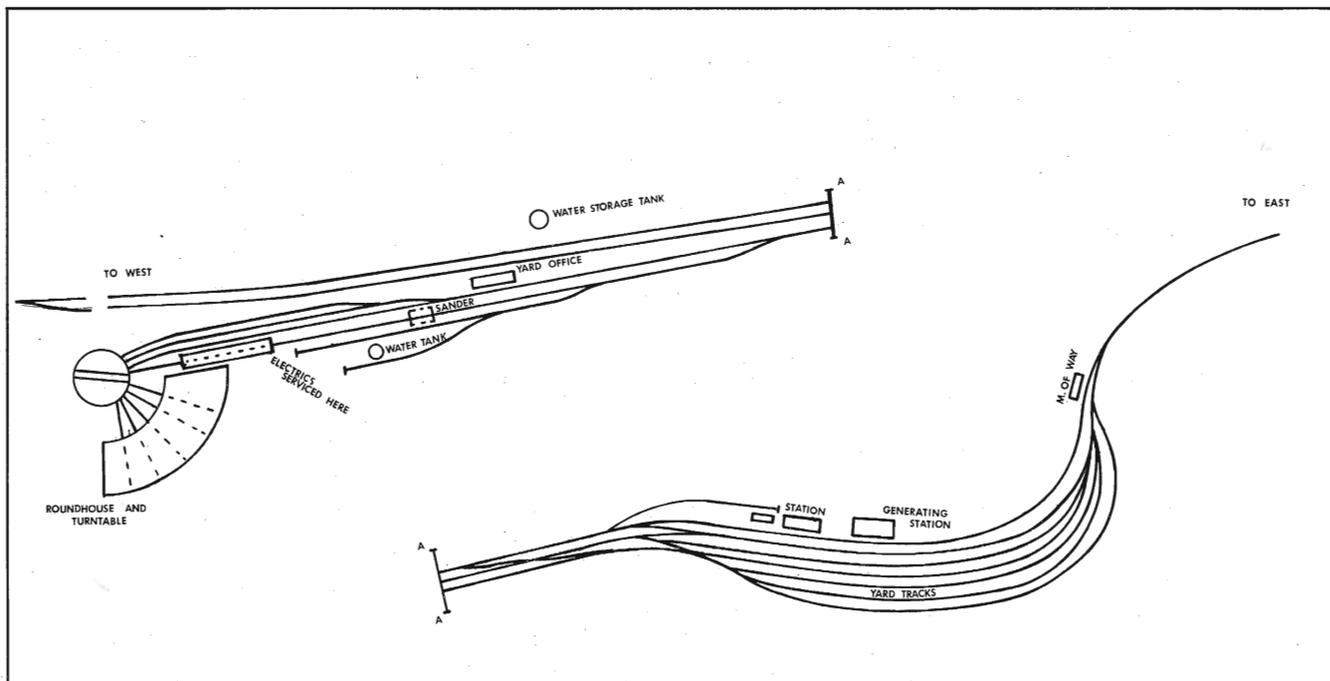
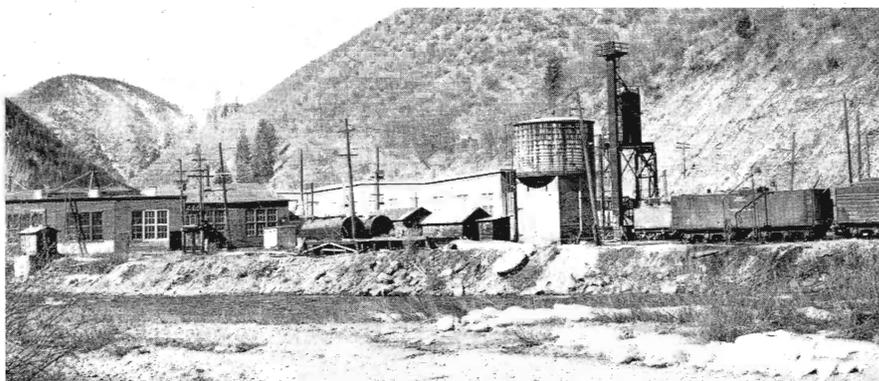


E-71 rides the turntable—the electrics appear to be double-ended (Little Joes), yet one end is blanked off so that control can only be effected from the lead cab.

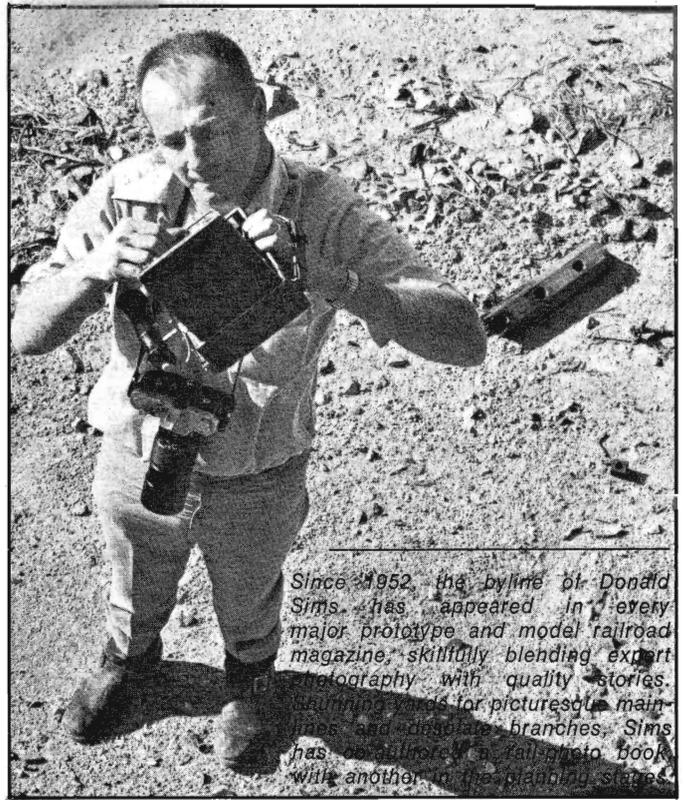


To pipe diesel fuel you need a pump house as witness this small facility near the roundhouse.

General scene of the lower end of the terminal. The roundhouse is to the left with the higher electric service shed alongside—it has to accommodate the wire so is taller—the usual height of wire is 24' 2".



Milwaukee style sander at Avery—same type of design can be found at other Milwaukee Road terminals.



Since 1952, the byline of Donald Sims has appeared in every major prototype and model railroad magazine, skillfully blending expert photography with quality stories. Scouting yards for picturesque main lines and obscure branches, Sims has authored a rail photo book with another in the planning stages.



General view of Avery's engine terminal. The building to the right houses the crew's register room, lockers, etc.

quiring first steam, then diesel to bridge it. In later years it's been simple to run the internal combustion examples straight through from the east, a decision which would have come harder had every milepost west of Harlowtown been imprinted with catenary. As it turns out the lengthy gap contributed to the demise of electrification.

Arrival from the eastern end of electrification, Harlowtown, involves a long journey across southern Montana, following rivers, thrusting across mountain passes when necessary and generally taking advantage of whatever natural course there is. But near the Idaho-Montana border luck runs out and to get over a barrier near Avery the last few miles is a rapidly descending worm-like route of tunnels, bridges and acute angled curvature. Useable land around here being at a premium, Milwaukee Road's decision to survey a small

terminal at Avery and dead-end the electrification had to work with limited resources.

The small yard—really a few extra tracks—gives ground with the curvature of the parallel streambed. Trains arriving from the east come out of a cut and enter the yard which immediately slopes rightwards, opens up to a half dozen less than lengthy tracks and slims down almost immediately. Off to one side sits a red brick generating station, typical of those to be seen anywhere in electrified territory, plus a train order station and a couple of company buildings.

The one street in town—it's also the highway in and out—meanders around the spurs of mountain slopes, keeping in tune with the roadbed's gyrations. Between the railroad and a few houses there's little space for much else as the surrounding terrain rises sharply from the riverbanks. Of the northwestern carriers, Milwau-

kee Road's surveyors came through last, taking what was still available and it wasn't easy. Drawing a line west from the Dakotas to the Pacific Coast you'll discover that CM& St.P. rails don't serve too many towns, the consequence of getting off the starting blocks several years behind the pioneers.

At the foot of a helper district and originally designed to be a place where motive power forms were substituted, Avery's western limits are given over to engine servicing facilities. Since the river took an improvident turn just below the train order office the carrier had to locate its engine terminal some few hundred feet away—where the next wide spot was discovered. This was accomplished by slimming the yard down to a two track lead to connect the upper with the lower end of the terminal.

(Text continued on page 60)

PENN. RR

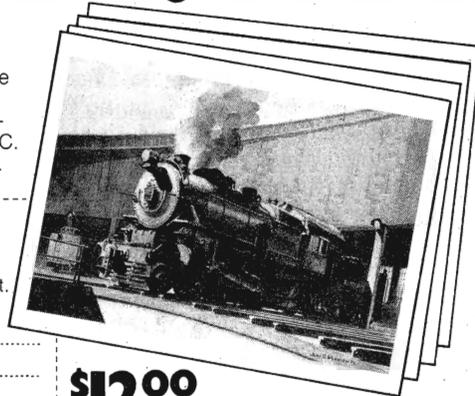
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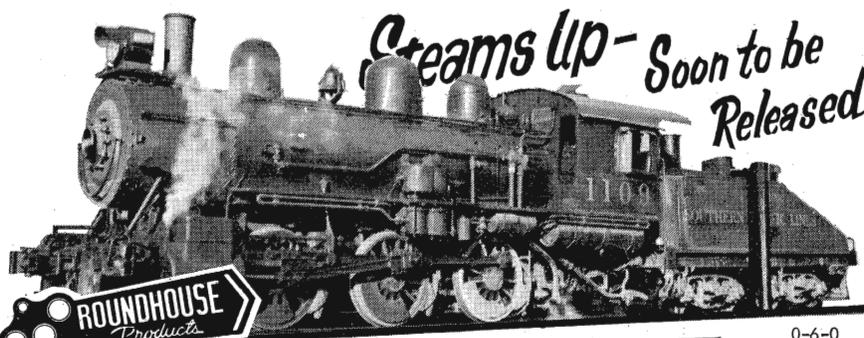


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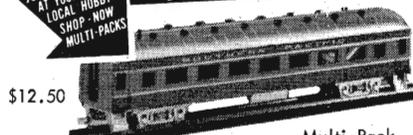
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Avery

(Text continued from page 27)

The riverbank terminal is one of the few locations ever to build a roundhouse right next door to a juice-jack shelter. As it originally came to be, the power changed at Avery was steam to electric and vice versa, resulting in a need for two forms of equipment. The electric take power from a wire slightly over 24' above the rail, a requirement incompatible with steam engine servicing. To cut down on investment the two structures were placed alongside one another so a common turntable could serve both.

Between the roundhouse and main line are a few engine ready tracks where there is usually a set or two of box cab motors for helper use plus some diesels, mostly smaller examples which trade-off on drags coming west. The larger power, the SD-45's and heavier G.E. units, normally push through Avery without a pause except for crew changes and whatever business they have with the electrification. The long distance hotshots will pick up a Joe or two for bridging Montana, dropping them off at wire's end while the diesels run through.

The usual collection of supporting gear hovers around the service buildings at the engine terminal. There's a sand tower, a water tank left over from a previous era and dug into the hillside because of lack of room elsewhere plus some odds and ends of small structures for diesel fuel pumps, etc. Frequently overlooked by the modeling fraternity it's this unglamorous but very necessary detail that injects reality into a layout.

The operating clock at Avery is kind of light. Six trains a day doesn't make for a sweatshop but there is a flurry of activity every time a couple of trains come by within a few minutes of each other. The dispatcher isn't fond of meeting trains on the hill so more often than not west-bound schedules will try to pass their opposite counterparts at Avery, often involving a wait for a half hour or so. It takes time to cut off or throw in electric power, especially so with helpers which are typically fitted in mid-train. Presumably when the final switch is pulled diesel helpers will be brought to town to work the hill, but that's anybody's guess at the moment.

But with or without the wire, Avery is an attractive blueprint. And blueprints are made to copy.