



Flying the Coop

Connie Sauve continues to share her “On the Road Again” vehicle series. In this issue Ma and Pa Kettle are on their way to the county fair.

BY CONNIE SAUVE

This project started when I was searching for metal trucks on eBay and happened upon a whimsical, vintage looking truck. The truck was originally sold as a promotion by Diamond Nuts in 2002, and a bag of nuts was included with the vehicle. I had never seen their vehicles before, and after a bit of researching, found they had produced several vintage vehicles in the series, including several vintage cars, trucks, motorcycles and an airplane. I was drawn to the whimsy of the truck and immediately thought of Ma and Pa Kettle. Even though these two characters were way before my time, and I had never actually seen any of their movies, I had heard of them and that's what I envisioned their truck would look like. I decided

the scene would be based on them and set in the early 1930's.

Since I had the characters already figured out, for a change of pace, I thought it might be fun to actually have the figures sitting inside the truck. The inside of the cab looked plenty big and tall enough for them to sit inside, so now I needed to figure out where they were driving to in their truck. A country farm seemed natural for the style of the truck, and Ma and Pa were going to be heading to the county fair with their prize-winning farm animals, whom they are entering in the fair. All the animals would be in wood cages stacked in the back of the truck.

The vehicles are close to 1:12 scale and look large in a small project, so they tend to take over a scene. I like to have several other things



going on that tells the story, and have the vehicle be secondary. I also like to have a backdrop for my vehicles to help with the storyline. I quickly decided on a row of corn, behind a split-rail fence, next to a dirt road. I thought the green corn would give a nice colored backdrop for the dark rust and black colors of the truck.

The truck needed additional





1



2

1 Edna and Bert Kettle on their way to the county fair. 2 The county fair sign is a hint to where Ma and Pa are headed and also the era of the scene. 3 The goose before it was flocked and feathered. 4 The finished goose. 5 There won't be any corn left after the crows are done!



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Above is a look at the back of the scene showing all the animals. To the left, the chickens are flying the coop!

rust added and a few other things altered, so I removed some metal bands in front of the windows, and also removed the spare tire on the back of the cab. To make door handles, I used a door handle mold I had made from a different vehicle and poured two resin handles, painted and glued these to the doors.

I didn't care for the truck's wheels as they were too clunky and cartoon looking. I had one, wood-spoked tire in my stash, but couldn't find any more of them or anything similar, even after searching online. I finally contacted the original maker of the wheel and she said she would ship them to me shortly. After a couple months of waiting, I was at the point where I needed the wheels to finish the project and I didn't know if I would ever receive them, so I de-



ecided I was going to have to make a two-part mold of the wheel I had, and pour four new resin wheels myself. I had never made a two-part mold before, so I did a bit of research online, then came up with a plan for making the mold and successfully poured the four wheels. After painting, aging

and attaching them to the truck, the new wheels looked so much better!

Fun side story....a couple of years after I was finished with the project, I was looking on eBay and saw an auction for one of the wheels I had been looking for. I won the auction, and when the wheel arrived, to my



The vintage, aged truck perfectly sets off the 1930's scene.

surprise, there were four additional unfinished wheels in the box. The seller was the artist who originally made the wheels, and she had remembered, two years later, that she had promised she would send me four wheels. I couldn't believe how sweet she was to include them for free and what a great memory she had! Miniaturists are such thoughtful people!

For this project, once again I wanted to try and use things from my mini stash. So, I dug through my farm animals and found a cute pink pig, and a sheep, both from Schleich and two geese from Falcon Miniatures. The pig and sheep fit perfectly in the truck bed, and the geese would be sitting on top in their cage.

I like to have a bit of humor in my miniature scenes, so early on I decided to incorporate two flying chickens that were escaping out of their cage. I already had three flying white chickens on order with Teresa Dudley for yet another vehicle project, so I told her to make me an additional flying

white chicken and a colorful rooster to go with this project. They were the inspiration for the name of the project, "Flying the Coop". They wanted no part in going to the county fair!

“For this project, once again I wanted to try and use things from my mini stash.”

This project was going to require two large, and two smaller wood cages. I had made several cages in the past to hold other critters like: mice, rats, a spider and chickens. I already had one wood crate in my stash that somebody else had made, which would work perfect for the chickens. One less cage to make! I was thrilled, since making the cages is a lot of work. I dug out the supplies I needed and set to work measuring the bed of the truck and the animals.

I was going to need every tiny bit of space for the two large cages, as the pig was too long. After finishing the large cages, they fit exactly inside the bed of the truck, I didn't even have a 1/16" extra space! Too close! Adding hay bits in the bottoms of the cages gave them the final touch.

For the animals, I had been wanting to learn how to fur and feather animals, so this was the perfect time to learn, as I like to learn a new skill with each project. The pig didn't take much work, I just rubbed some antiquing gel on him and wiped it off – done! The antiquing gel made a huge difference and brought out the details of the pig. I put the pig in his cage and shut the door. He barely fit. His butt was against the back bars and his snout had to be positioned to fit between two of the bars on the door. I took a look at his back end and once again, just like in a previous truck project, poor little piggy had to get trimmed a bit. I cut his tail off, carved off some extras underneath it and glued the tail back on.

I worked on the geese next. The standing goose looked more like a large duck than a goose, so I first added a bit of weight to his underbelly using Paperclay. This helped tremendously to make him look more like a goose instead of a large duck. Then I repainted their beaks and feet with orange. White flocking was added to the whole body and head. After trimming some white feathers to size, these were added to the ends of the wings. Then a bit more flocking was added to hide the cut ends of the feathers. I love how they turned out!

Since the sheep was the hardest, I left her for last. She is a Shropshire black-faced sheep, so first I flocked her face, ears and legs with black flocking. Then I glued longer pieces of natural colored wool all over her



Above shows the before and after of the pig. Connie proves you can make a basic store bought pig look like a work of art!

body. After lots of trimming, I had a beautiful woolled sheep. I decided to add a red ribbon with a bell around her neck to make her pretty for the judges at the county fair.

By this time, the flying chicken and rooster had arrived. They had just the right touch of lighthearted humor on their faces. I had Teresa attach a wire coming out of each of their little bums, this was how they were going to be suspended to appear to be flying. It took a bit of thought trying to figure out how to best position them so the wire disappeared. I added a few loose feathers in their cage and onto the wires to help camouflage them and they were ready to take flight. Won't Ma and Pa be surprised when they get to the fair and their chickens are missing?

Next, I started on the landscaping for the base. Once again I used the sawdust, Elmer's Glue and real dirt method to create the dirt road. Nothing makes realistic looking dirt like using real dirt. I then made a split-rail wood fence, and had fun designing the swinging wooden gate. For the gate, I started with a wood wagon wheel in the center and designed around the wheel with split rails. The gate actually swings open and closed, and stays open by hooking

a length of rope around one of the fence posts.

For the row of cornstalks, I was hoping to find some I could buy finished, as I needed 15 stalks, and I was displaying this project in a week at the Good Sam show. But I couldn't find any that looked 'real', so I ended up making them myself. I used online reference photos and figured I

‘Won't Ma and Pa be surprised when they get to the fair and their chickens are missing?’

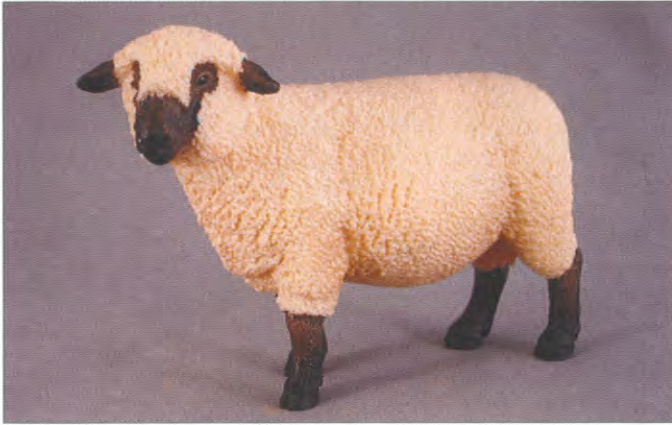
needed to make 150 leaves, 40 corn cobs and some of the silk tassels at the top of the stalk. Each stalk took 7 strands to make the tassel, so that's 105 strands. I took a deep breath. This was going to take a while.

I used two different shades of green floral tape for the corn stalk. For the corn cobs, most of them I made totally closed, so I just used Q-Tips for the corn shape and totally covered the cotton tip with floral tape leaves. I also wanted some slightly

open cobs at the top of some of the corn stalks. I had a lot of loose finished slightly open corn cobs in my veggie stash, so I cheated a bit and started with those and just added a couple floral tape leaves so they blended in with the rest of the corn stalk. Once all the pieces and parts were made, I assembled each corn stalk and planted them in the furrows I had made in the dirt. Making 15 corn stalks all at once was a lot of work, but I am SO glad I ended up making them myself.

For the additional final touches, I added a farm dog by Leslie Frick, who is seeing the truck off. I also made a county fair sign on my computer. The sign shows each of the animals in the truck (except the cow). The county fair sign is a subtle hint as to where the farm couple are going with their animals. Sitting on top of the sign is a crow and another one is busy eating a corn cob on the ground. Where there is corn, there has to be crows, right?

The final touch was to make Ma and Pa Kettle, who I decided to name Bert and Edna Kettle. I started with resin doll parts from Marcia Backstrom. I really like her dolls for older people because they have so much character. I painted the



The Schleich Shropshire black-faced sheep before (left) and after (right) adding wool and flocking.

faces of the two figures and then costumed them. I had a beautiful cherry pie in my stash for Edna to hold, she is entering it in the pie contest at the county fair.

Now came the hard part – getting the figures into the cab of the truck! Now that I had the figures finished, the cab didn't look quite as big inside as it did when I had the bright idea to have them sitting inside the truck. I started with Bert, and bent him so he sat exactly as needed. I sent Bert in through the front windshield. I had to put his hands in the correct position on the steering wheel. It took about 5 tries and eventually I got him seated inside. His head hit the ceiling of the truck cab, but he was wearing a hat, so he looked fine. Now it was Edna's turn. I bent her to be seated too and also sent her in through the front windshield. She took a couple tries, but I finally got her into position in her seat.

Next, I added a piece of thin plastic for the front windshield and also windows for the doors, I wanted them to look partly rolled down as it was going to be a hot trip to the county fair. The windows added a lot of detail to the truck. I will have to go back and add windows to all my other trucks now!

I actually had the scene finished

for a couple years, then it dawned on me that I needed a scarecrow for the cornfield. I had remembered seeing a scarecrow tutorial by Joann Swanson in an old Nutshell News that I had always wanted to make. I found the issue with the tutorial and made the scarecrow from fabrics and miscellaneous things I had on hand. I tied him to a wood post with a crossbar for his arms. Apparently, the scarecrow didn't turn out scary enough, as two cheeky crows are perched happily on top of him and several others are munching away at the corn, along with a rat also eating

a corncob. Poor Ma and Pa. There won't be an ear of corn left by the time they get back from the fair.

This project turned out to be one of my favorite scenes from my truck series. I love how the figures look inside the truck, with the row of cornstalks and those hilarious escaping chickens. The whole scene just makes me smile!

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me Connie Sauve at cmsauve2@gmail.com. Be sure to look for my two tutorials in this issue as well!

