Dust happens.

I’ve noticed that a lot of the buildings on my layout are starting to look shabbier than they should. Colors are dim, and on close inspection, years of dust has collected over everything that isn’t handled regularly and put away.

Spiders have also woven webs. They live in basements.
I’m lucky that I haven’t fixed my buildings permanently to the layout—in part because I have very little scenery so far. It’s a lot easier to pick up a building and clean it away from the layout than to lean over, break things, and spread the dust from one building to another part of the layout.

I initially tried vacuuming the buildings with an attachment from Micro-Mark that connects to a small shop vacuum. The tube ends with a soft brush, which is gentle on structure materials but overall the vacuum in this configuration doesn’t do a very good job. Not enough suction.

There are brushes that fit over the full sized hose of a shop vac, but these are generally too coarse, and the vacuum from the hose is too strong. If any vacuum is used for cleaning, I recommend using one that doesn’t have bags. If a detail is sucked up, a shop vac can be opened to recover the item—better than having to rip open a bag full of dirt. Also, it’s best to empty out the shop vac before starting, in case something you want gets sucked in there.
I found that a soft brush worked really well for dusting. It went fast when I could hold the models away from everything and just let the dust fly. I used these two, mostly the big one—the smaller one was for getting into cracks. The big one might be called a “mop” brush—both have very soft bristles.

Dusting really restored the colors.
I’m going to try to make every building, or at least these smaller ones, and almost any other detail other than plant life, removable for cleaning and repair. This will mean making sure that the footprints of buildings are clear—in most cases with a foundation.