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CLASSIC TOY
TRAINS MAGAZINE

TOY TRAINS

A supplement to *Classic Toy Trains* magazine

618173

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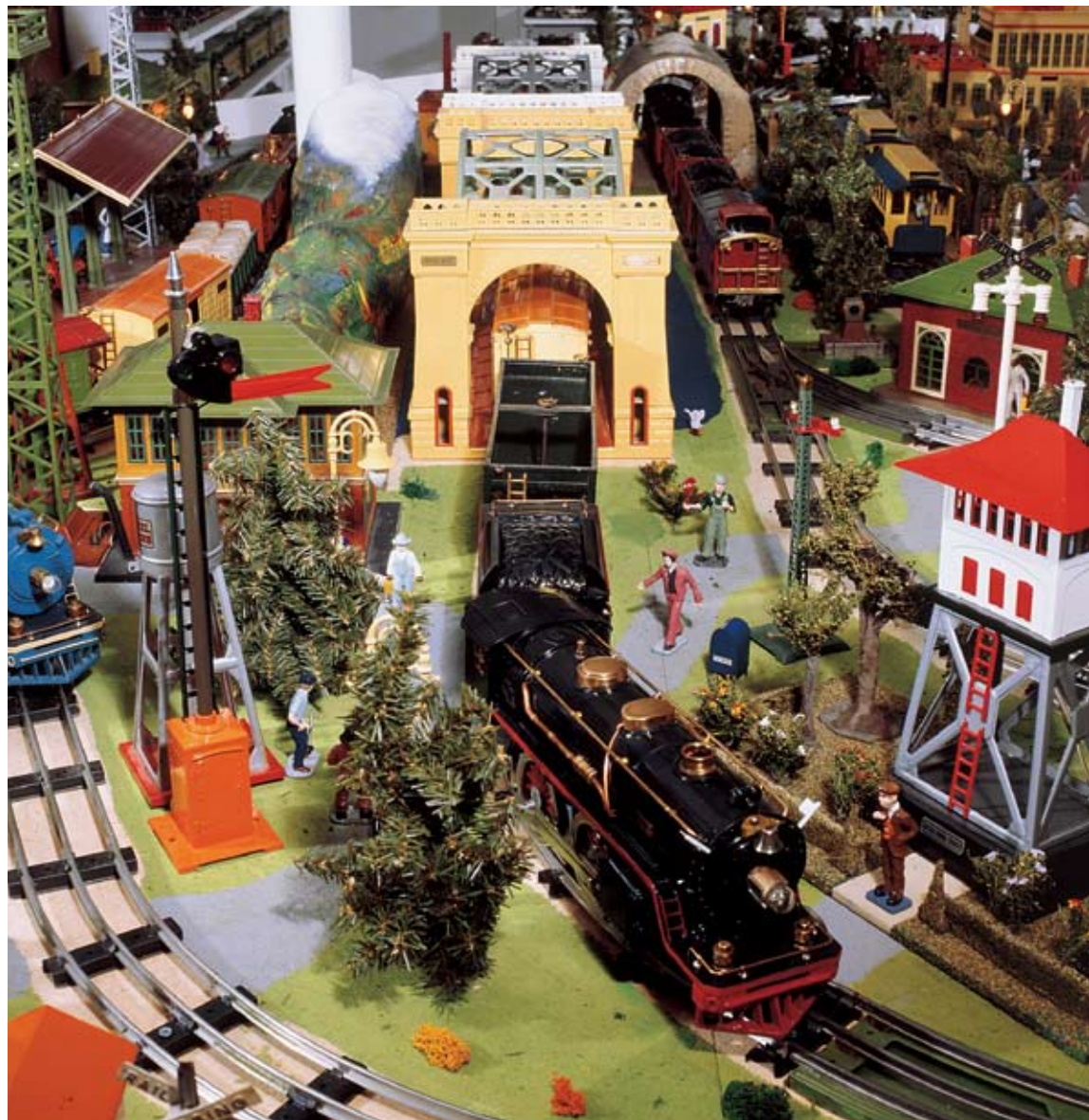
by Roger Carp, Senior Editor, *Classic Toy Trains* magazine

WELCOME TO the enjoyable and exciting hobby of toy trains! Millions of people, young and old, have been having fun with toy trains almost from the time the first railroads were built back in the 1820s. Naturally, toy trains have changed over those many generations – in size, power, and detail – but the pleasure that children and adults have found in them has never vanished.

Folks enter this hobby in a number of ways, one of which may have been your experience. Perhaps you found your childhood train set after many years and want to relive the fun you had with those toys. Maybe you picked up a vintage toy locomotive and cars at a yard sale or an antique store. Or possibly you received as a gift one of the outstanding trains being manufactured today. However you arrived, we're glad to welcome you to the ranks of those around the world that love toy trains and appreciate their magic.

Before going too far, we should talk about what a toy train is. You likely know what one is by seeing or holding it. A toy train is a miniature representation of a locomotive, freight car, or passenger car found on an actual railroad.

Scale model railroaders expect that representation to be a precise model of an actual piece of railroad equipment. By contrast, toy train enthusiasts don't insist on having perfect replicas. They understand that a toy is supposed to provide joy and help kids of all ages escape from the demands of everyday life.



RIGHT: The amazingly colorful world of pre-World War II Lionel Standard gauge trains and accessories comes alive on this layout. Everywhere you look there is action and fun.



ABOVE: Lionel's O gauge trains, in particular the Santa Fe F3 diesels shown here, filled countless dreams of children growing up in the post-World War II years.

LEFT: The O gauge trains that are being manufactured now by such firms as Atlas O, Lionel, MTH Electric Trains, and Williams surpass their postwar "ancestors" in terms of performance, decoration, and detail.



ABOVE: A scene like this one brings back so many memories. Toy train operators and collectors confess that nostalgia is a big reason for their participation in this hobby. That's why they appreciate new trains like these O gauge models made by Marx Trains. This beauty, along with the buildings behind, recapture delightful moments from the pre-World War II period.

HOW DO TOY trains enhance our lives? There are probably as many answers to that simple question as there are people in the hobby. Many enthusiasts, from the youngest to the oldest, enjoy "operating" their trains. They enjoy making them move, whether by pushing them with their hands or using electricity to power them along tracks. In fact, running trains is often just the beginning for operators, especially if they decide to build "layouts." That's the name we give scenes filled with buildings, trees, vehicles, and figures that surround the tracks on which models operate.

Other toy train hobbyists prefer "collecting." They enjoy looking for and acquiring vintage models made by American or European firms. Collectors study what was made in the 19th and 20th centuries and seek to obtain examples of various locomotives, cars, and "accessories" (stations, bridges, signals, lights, freight loaders, and more).

They may then display their collections on shelves or in cases and share what they have found with others. No matter what they collect, these enthusiasts enjoy learning more about the toy trains of the past and the companies that made them.

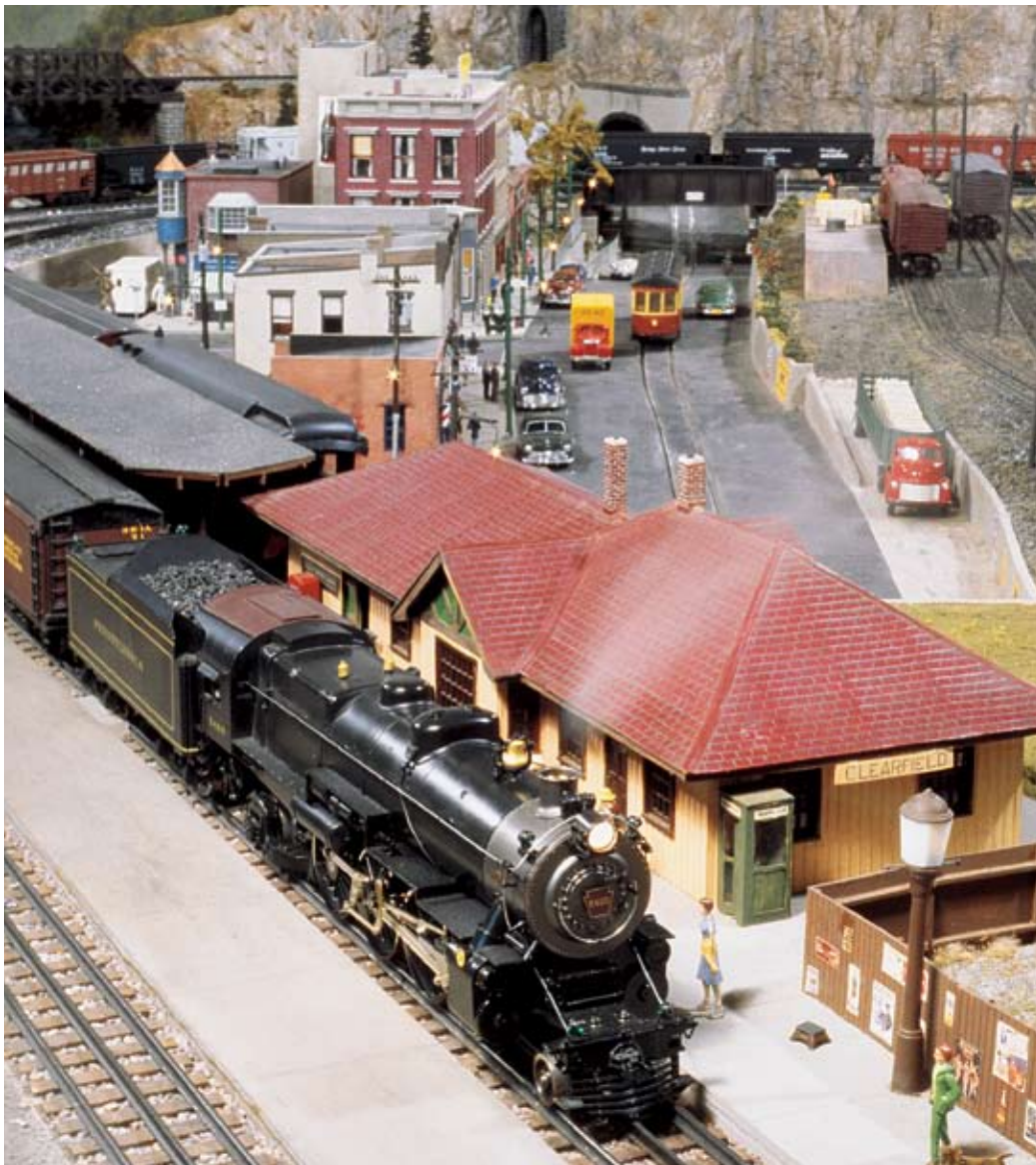
Millions of people, young and old,
have been having fun with toy trains
from the time the first railroads were
constructed back in the 1820s.

Still other hobbyists fall somewhere in between these two ends of the spectrum. For example, they may acquire some vintage trains that need to be repaired before they can be operated again. Taking apart toy locomotives and freight loaders, diagnosing their problems, and fixing them are tasks that offer great challenges. Best of all, you don't need an advanced degree in mechanical engineering to get an old train up and running again. Anyone with patience and curiosity can pick up the necessary skills.

Finally, there are those toy train enthusiasts who delight in finding beat-up old trains and restoring them to their former beauty. They boast of buying "ugly ducklings" for a pittance and then, by repainting them and adding lost details, transforming them into "lovely swans." As with repairs, you just need to take your time, do some reading, and practice. Soon you'll gain valuable experience with basic electronics, painting and finishing, soldering, wiring, and more.

In short, regardless of what you want out of a hobby – sheer relaxation, challenges to learn more, or friendship – you'll find it with toy trains. It's safe to say that the camaraderie you'll gain with other hobbyists may turn out to be the most enjoyable part of all.

Making new friends and sharing enjoyment with family members naturally occur as you get involved with vintage and contemporary toy trains. So many times we hear about the bonds among different generations growing stronger through trains. Maybe that's why so many people say this is the finest hobby of all.



LEFT: One popular way to enjoy toy trains is to buy new models, such as this striking O gauge steam locomotive and tender made by Weaver, and re-create scenes from the past.

BELOW LEFT: Other enthusiasts like to collect vintage models. Viewers get a kick out of seeing these neat O gauge streamliners made by Hafner and Marx in the 1930s and 1940s.

BELOW RIGHT: Operating pre-World War II trains, especially Wide gauge trains produced by Dorfan, American Flyer, and Ives, has never gone out of fashion. More and more hobbyists also enjoy restoring their trains.



Golden ages of toy trains

YOU MAY NOT have realized it, but you've chosen a terrific time to join our hobby. The turn of the 21st century amounts to one of the golden ages of toy trains. The new products that are being released, the vintage trains currently available, and the ongoing excitement in the hobby combine to add thrills and magic to a hobby that has known its share of glory over the past 150 years.

The first golden age took place in Europe more than a century ago. Firms in England, France, and Germany advanced the art of toy making with their uses of painted cast iron and lithographed stamped tin. The trains they made featured locomotives that were powered by either windup mechanisms very similar to those used for clocks or small steam engines.

Those locomotives and the cars they pulled captured the colorful, quaint look of 19th-century railroading. No wonder hobbyists have long appreciated the beauty and craftsmanship that distinguish these playthings and the marvelous accessories that went with them to create miniature railway systems.

Before long, American manufacturers were stepping in to offer children in this country small representations of the trains used on the New York Central and Union Pacific. Small firms emerged in the late 19th century to make mechanical trains to challenge European imports. Eventually, inventors devised toys that used electricity as a power source.

The greatest of these enterprises, although not the first to experiment with an electric toy train, was Lionel. It transformed the American market in the early 20th century with its models, overwhelmed its domestic and foreign rivals, and ushered in the next golden age in the 1920s and '30s.

Enthusiasts of all ages prize the brilliantly enameled locomotives and rolling stock that Lionel and other American firms offered in

the decades between the two world wars. Some focus on the large "Standard" or "Wide" gauge trains. They speak reverently about the *Blue Comet* sets made by Lionel and Boucher as well as the *Prosperity Special* from Ives. The color, detail, and elegance of these large toy trains has, according to many enthusiasts, never been surpassed.

Other hobbyists prefer the realism of the smaller O gauge masterpieces released in the 1930s. To them, the sleek streamliners and scale quality of Lionel's Hudson and freight cars are the true classics of the prewar period.

NOT SURPRISINGLY, folks who grew up after World War II insist that the trains they played with were the best. The postwar years represent a third golden age, one that's probably the most popular among collectors of vintage trains. Lionel's powerful die-cast metal steamers and American Flyer's plastic diesels captured the imagination of a generation. Kids coming of age in the 1950s had no doubt that an electric train was the finest gift anyone could receive. Those toys meant the world to children then, just as certain computer games and action figures do to kids today.

The passion that baby boomers felt for their trains never really left them. It exploded in the 1970s and '80s, with many of them, now married with kids, chasing after the toys they had owned – or dreamed of owning. Thus began a fourth golden age, one that has grown only brighter.

Initially, a desire to acquire vintage trains predominated and the collecting side of the hobby grew. Soon, however, Lionel and such newcomers as K-Line and MTH Electric

BELOW: Baby boomers insist that the post-World War II era was the true golden age of toy trains. They prize these Lionel O gauge sets as well as the S gauge American Flyer models that were produced by the A.C. Gilbert Co.





ABOVE: These Lionel Standard gauge trains and trolleys from the first quarter of the 20th century impress many collectors as among the finest American toys ever made.

RIGHT: Growing numbers of hobbyists realize that they are living in another golden age. The color and realistic detail of these O gauge locomotives and freight cars, which are manufactured by such current leaders as Lionel, MTH, Weaver, and Atlas O, have inspired growing numbers of adults and children to become toy train operators and build layouts.

Trains introduced new trains. They capitalized on technological breakthroughs to develop models equipped with amazing sound systems and computer-driven controls.

Realism became paramount, but without sacrificing the color and effects that made these trains toys. Playing with trains again meant operating them and building layouts. Families eager to tighten their bonds turned to toy trains. Like you, they're discovering the joys of this hobby and the many ways that it strengthens tradition.



Getting started

NOW THAT YOU know what a great time this is to enter the hobby, you're wondering how you take those first steps. Of course, if you're reading a booklet like this, chances are you have already shown an interest in toy trains by wandering into a hobby shop or attending a train show. But let's see where you go next to make this hobby an important and enjoyable part of your life.

Make a hobby shop your first stop and spend some time talking with the proprietor about operating and collecting toy trains. While you're there, pick up a magazine or two and learn about how people enjoy their trains. Then consider what you want out of this hobby. Does collecting appeal to you more than operating? Are you the type that will enjoy restoring or repairing old trains? Do you prefer buying something new that you can run right away?

Only you can answer these questions. If you aren't sure, spend time talking with friends and new acquaintances who have experience with toy trains. Ask them what they enjoy about the hobby. Don't forget to inquire about the time and money they spend to make it fun. Decide how much you want to invest in this hobby. Dream of big things, but don't let your feet get too far off the ground.

Once you've talked with some hobbyists and reached answers about what you want, then by all means jump in!

A terrific way to learn about toy trains is to attend one of the shows regularly put on by

local organizations and national groups in most metropolitan areas. At train shows, you'll see an array of vintage and contemporary models, most of them available for sale.

The number and variety of trains that are on display may seem overwhelming. Relax and keep your wallet in your pocket. There's no need to buy everything right away.

As you visit shows and talk with hobbyists and dealers, you'll reach conclusions about how you can best enjoy toy trains. Now you're ready to acquire a few pieces, old or new.

THINK VINTAGE trains are what you want? Then start searching! Look in your attic to see if the set from your childhood is still around. The best local sources include estate sales and thrift shops, along with stores that specialize in toy trains. Check your newspaper's classified ads for trains being sold, or place your own advertisement so people selling trains can contact you. Attending shows and joining train clubs can lead to great finds while introducing you to fellow hobbyists.





ABOVE: Hobby shops are terrific places to learn about the hobby, meet knowledgeable enthusiasts, and acquire tips on buying trains and planning layouts.

OPPOSITE PAGE: New companies, such as S-Helper Service, have revived S gauge by bringing out gorgeous new locomotives and freight and passenger cars.

RIGHT: Scenery makes a layout come to life. Adding hills, trees, and structures is easier than you think – just start with the right materials and information. Don't you love the details on this O gauge layout set in the Appalachians?

Toy train magazines carry ads from mail-order firms that sell collectible trains to people around the world. Before making major purchases, ask hobbyists about their experiences with these firms and the prices being asked. The same advice holds true if you explore the Internet or take part in auctions.

What if your eyes are on contemporary toy trains? Neighborhood hobby shops are the place to start. You can obtain catalogs put out by current manufacturers and see what they're making. Look at magazines and consult the product reviews they publish to learn how professionals have evaluated newly released locomotives, accessories, and electronic devices.

Once you make your purchase, examine the train to be sure it is what the dealer stated it was. If you operate your trains, get them up and running so you can enjoy their features.

As they acquire more trains, most enthusiasts start planning a layout. Toy trains were made to be played with, so find a way to do so, even if that means running them around a loop of track on the floor or a bare piece of plywood.

Enjoy what you have while looking ahead and you'll soon feel as though you've been in this hobby your entire life.



Make a hobby shop your first stop and spend some time talking with the proprietor about the hobby. While there, pick up a magazine or two and learn how people enjoy their trains.

Gauges & scales

WHETHER YOU plan to operate or display your trains, you've noticed they vary in size. When craftsmen fashioned the first ones in the mid-19th century, they didn't care about this lack of uniformity. After all, children planned to do no more than push or pull their toys across a floor. Not too many years passed, however, before toy makers realized their trains would look better on track.

They had to ensure that the distance between the wheels of their trains was consistent. Thus were born specific gauges – the name for the space between the inside rails of miniature tracks.

As European manufacturers explored the advantages of differing gauges in the late 19th century, they tailored the size of their trains to be somewhat proportionate to the gauges. For this reason, No. 2 gauge models, which ran on track with rails 2 inches apart, were consistently larger (although not twice as large) than their No. 1 gauge counterparts, whose track had rails 1½ inches apart. Smaller still were O gauge trains (pronounced “oh” but originally meaning “zero”), which operated on track with a distance of 1¼ inches between the rails.

In the early decades of the 20th century, European and American toy makers started to pay more attention to the scale aspects of their models. “Scale” refers to the comparative ratio of a model's measurements to the dimensions of its full-size prototype.

These toy firms did so to make manufacturing more efficient and to meet the demands

of hobbyists who wanted more realism in their models. With rare exceptions, toy firms didn't strive to make perfectly scale models. All the same, changing consumer interests and improved technology enabled them in the 1930s to make trains that were closer to scale.

Early scales, such as No. 1 and No. 2, were developed in Europe and then brought to America when firms exported toy trains in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Over time, the popularity of those larger gauges waned and new ones caught the public's attention.

The most important of the new gauges that emerged before World War I in the United States was known as “Standard” or “Wide.” Trains in this gauge, which ran on track whose rails were 2½ inches apart, remained on the market until the eve of World War II.

The most popular gauge for toy trains has long been O. Trains in this gauge were first made at the turn of the 20th century. Over the years, especially after World War II, hobbyists claimed that O was the perfect size for a youngster or an adult to operate at home. A circle of O gauge track was 31 inches in diameter and fit on most tables.

RIGHT: The large size of toy trains that Lionel called Standard gauge was known as Wide gauge to aficionados of American Flyer, Dorfan, and Ives in the prewar period.





ABOVE: You can see the relative sizes of (left to right) Standard, O, and S gauge trains.

RIGHT: The streamlined Royal Blue locomotive and tender were among the favorites in the A.C. Gilbert Co.'s S gauge American Flyer line during the late 1940s.

Later, in the 1930s, a slightly smaller version of track that had a diameter of 27 inches (known as "O-27") emerged as an inexpensive and popular alternative on which many O gauge trains can run smoothly.

O GAUGE TRAINS have an approximate proportion of 1:48 (1 inch represents 4 feet). In other words, an actual boxcar that measured 50 feet in length could be replicated in an O gauge version 12½ inches long. The engineers designing O and O-27 gauge locomotives and rolling stock didn't worry if the models they built were a bit larger or smaller than were others as long as their toy trains fit the spacing of the track on which they ran. Designers left the field of precise scale modeling to those who popularized a scale that is almost half the size of O and therefore is known as "HO" (pronounced "aitch-oh").

Of course, O gauge had its challengers. Beginning in the 1930s, a few manufacturers pushed a slightly smaller gauge known as S that measures ⅞ inches between the inside rails. They built their models to a ratio of 1:64. Consequently, a 50-foot boxcar, which became a 12½-inch model in O gauge, measured only 9⅞ inches in S.

Keep in mind, however, that toy makers seldom made precise scale models. That's why actual Lionel and Marx O gauge boxcars tend to be shorter than their scale cousins.



ABOVE: Lionel, the best-known manufacturer of toy trains in the United States, continues to make stunning O gauge trains more than a century after the firm was founded. A recent version of its beloved F3 diesel rounds the bend into a station.

Operating

TOY TRAINS weren't meant to sit on shelves – that's the prevailing view of most hobbyists. As much as collectors enjoy keeping their prizes in the original boxes or on static displays, there's something odd about a toy train whose most strenuous activity is gathering dust. Maybe that's why most enthusiasts, including the majority of those who call themselves collectors, insist on operating their trains.

Once you've acquired a toy train, whether contemporary or vintage, you'll want to see it run. New ones are made to go right out of the box, so you shouldn't have any problems with them. Vintage toy trains should be checked carefully before being put on a track. But you can easily learn to troubleshoot them and make sure they're ready to operate. Miniature electric trains were designed to run and run and run despite all the wear and tear a kid can inflict. You should be able to put virtually any train you buy through its paces with ease.

Where do you start? How about with a simple loop of track on the floor or on top of a table? Just make sure that the track is new or has been cleaned up well. You'll also need a power source, generally known as a "transformer," because it transforms household current into a usable power source. Now let your train do its thing. See how easy it is to become an operator?

Once you have your train running, you may want something a bit more elaborate. Here is where operators take the plunge and become layout builders. They create miniature scenes, in which trains run, haul freight, move passengers, and capture the spirit of the bustling world of railroading.

Building a layout is the kind of project that made toy trains so much fun and educational for youngsters long ago. With their parents they designed and constructed model railroads that delighted them for years.

Layouts come in all different shapes, sizes, and styles. Many operators insist on making their model railroads look as realistic as possible. They adopt what is called a "hi-rail" approach. They build realistic scenery, add details, and run their trains in a fashion that simulates an actual railroad. Sure, the track may have three rails and the proportions of all the locomotives may not be exactly in scale. All the same, hi-railers come the closest to realism of any toy train enthusiasts.

At the other end of the spectrum are those operators who want to maintain the toy-like look and atmosphere they identify with their trains. If their accessories are horribly out of scale, they don't mind. If they run a train from the pre-World War II period with a contemporary one, it doesn't keep them awake at night. So what if they couple a Conrail locomotive from the 1980s to Western Pacific cars from the 1920s?

These toy train operators adopt a relaxed approach to the hobby and use it to enhance their lives. They don't berate themselves for departing from realistic practices. Instead, they create unique worlds, "never never lands," that reflect their own visions of what toys are for.

SOME LAYOUTS turn out to be small affairs, maybe 4 by 8 feet, with only an oval of track screwed down to green-painted plywood. These are the sorts of model railroads

RIGHT: For more than half a century, Lionel's O gauge locomotives and trains that are painted and lettered for the Santa Fe railroad have captivated toy train operators.





Designing and constructing a layout requires that you plan ahead, assess your resources, and never forget that having fun is the top priority.

that can be built in a few hours, yet still provide endless enjoyment. Others are huge and take many years to construct. The electronics are sophisticated, and the scenery takes on the appearance of grand art. You'll find pictures of both kinds of layouts sprinkled throughout this pamphlet. The most important element is that everyone involved with these miniature railroads is happy and finds the hobby challenging in the best sense.

How will you know which approach is the right one for you? Take your time and think about what you want to get out of this hobby. How much time can you afford to spend on it? And how much money is at your disposal?

Then start reading! Magazines, CLASSIC TOY TRAINS in particular, feature layouts of all sizes in every issue. Their articles offer tips on planning and building a spectacular layout that are aimed at beginning as well as longtime hobbyists. Books can do the same in greater depth. Be sure to visit local layouts and talk with the owners. Learn what they like about their railroads and what they might do differently.



Like building a collection, designing and constructing a layout requires that you plan ahead, assess your resources, and never forget that having fun is the top priority. Don't be in a rush because hurrying transforms a pastime into an obsession and robs you of pleasure.

Most of all, be proud of whatever you accomplish and always share what you learn, especially with children. In that way, you'll strengthen the hobby and return the favors other enthusiasts have done for you.

TOP: The O and O-27 gauge layouts that Lionel designed in the 1950s make great projects for operators or entire families to build and run.

ABOVE: Whether it's the 1950s or today, the colorful and action-packed trains and accessories that filled the S gauge American Flyer line are sure to thrill a kid.

Collecting

SEEMS THAT nowadays everybody – young and old alike – collects something. Rocks, stamps, stuffed animals, antique automobiles, electric appliances, teapots, and toy trains: we enjoy searching for these items and displaying them. Maybe we're motivated by nostalgia. We hunt for objects that remind us of what life was like when we were younger. Or we acquire objects that strike

us as “cool” as a way of telling others who we are. The fact that some of what we collect may appreciate in value is important, even if most of us insist that we don't view our collections simply as investments.

These factors – nostalgic, emotional, and financial – helped revive toy train collecting back in the 1970s and '80s. Revive but not launch the hobby because its roots go back to the period between the World Wars. Still, acquiring vintage toy trains gained unprecedented popularity once adult baby boomers began seeking the models they remembered from their youth. The hunt remains challenging, so welcome aboard!

Your first concern is, of course, what to collect. Newcomers often want to have a train like the one they played with long ago or once admired in a department store window. Not surprisingly, the kind of train folks owned while growing up, not to mention when they came of age, generally explains what they collect today.

BELOW: These Lionel O gauge cars from the last years of the prewar era delight us with their bright, vibrant colors.

Men and women of the postwar generation prefer trains and accessories made in the 1940s and '50s. But there are exceptions. Young people may find themselves fascinated with antiques. The colors or toy-like appearance of trains from the 19th and early 20th centuries captivate because they hearken back to a time so different from our own.

Nostalgia causes the demand for certain trains, notably postwar Lionel, to mushroom. Heightened demand makes it all but impossible to obtain every locomotive or accessory. For that reason, people decide to specialize. This is the point at which collections start to vary and reflect the personality and background of their owners. This is when the fun begins!

Some hobbyists decide to chase after certain types of models. They may collect nothing but toy cabooses or stations made by a host of manufacturers over many decades. Boxcars are very popular, and some collectors strive to acquire not just every model cataloged but also what are known as “variations” (slight differences in the appearance that distinguish models which otherwise seem identical). A spirited group of





ABOVE: Lionel O and O-27 gauge trains made during the postwar years are among the most popular to collect.

RIGHT: Specializing in certain cars, like these MTH and Weaver O gauge boxcars, or favorite railroads is also fun.

collectors goes after what is known as “toy train memorabilia.” In their homes catalogs, advertisements, boxes, and more earn the lion’s share of attention.

We also hear of enthusiasts who fill glass cases with models decorated for their favorite railroad. They don’t mind having O and S gauge engines and cars together, as long as all of them attest to the glory of the Southern Pacific or Atlantic Coast Line. A few folks opt strictly for color: If it’s blue, they want it, no matter whether it’s postwar or contemporary, lithographed tin or rubber-stamped plastic.

How else can you form a collection? Far-sighted individuals acquire models that no one else believes are collectible. For example, the small auxiliary or peripheral items produced by firms for their trains – figures, vehicles, structures, and car loads – were long overlooked until a few people started fighting over them. Now interest in these neat items has been skyrocketing.

You may choose to pick up new models whose beauty and detail seem impressive, so much so that you believe these are tomorrow’s collectibles. Plenty of new locomotives and sets have become highly desirable almost overnight. Yes, their value increases, but looking at current toy trains as mere investments can involve many risks and lead to disappointment.



AS YOU WALK around at a train show or visit a hobby shop, you'll come face to face with the wonderful world of toy trains. To guide you on your journey, here are brief descriptions of the major manufacturers of electric toy trains, a list of basic terms, and suggestions on where to turn next for information. Enjoy your "travels" through this hobby and good luck!

Notable American Manufacturers Past and Present

American Flyer Manufacturing Co. Formed in 1908, it began by making O gauge windup trains. Ten years later, the firm brought out electric trains. A line of Wide gauge models followed in 1925. American Flyer hung on through the Great Depression until its owners sold the line to the A. C. Gilbert Co. in 1938.

American Models. Starting in 1981, this firm brought out a line of S gauge freight and passenger cars. More recently, it has added models of diesel and steam locomotives.

Atlas O. This full line of O gauge trains was launched by Atlas Model Railroad Co. in 1997. Atlas O offers train sets, a full line of track, structures and accessories, and three locomotive/rolling-stock product lines: semi-scale Industrial Rail, mid-range Trainman, and top-level Master line. Atlas has been manufacturing HO scale trains and track since the 1940s.

A.C. Gilbert Co. Launched by Alfred Carlton Gilbert in 1909 to make magic outfits and Erector Sets, this firm expanded into the electric train market by buying the American Flyer line in 1938. It marketed O gauge and HO scale trains before World War II and continued with HO after 1945. Most of Gilbert's toy train resources went into an S gauge line it introduced in 1946. Success followed through the 1950s. Poor sales forced Gilbert to close its doors in 1967. Lionel bought control of the American Flyer line and today produces S gauge trains under the American Flyer brand.

Ives Manufacturing Corp. Founded in 1868, this maker of mechanical toys expanded to windup trains in O gauge in 1900. In 1910, it introduced a line of electric O gauge trains and accessories. Then in 1921, Ives added Wide gauge electric trains that could run on Lionel Standard gauge track. Ives filed for bankruptcy in 1928, and Lionel took over its line in 1930.

K-Line. A brand of O and O-27 gauge trains made by MDK Inc., which began as a mail-order retail operation in 1975. MDK entered the manufacturing field in 1985, and by 2005 offered a full range of locomotives, cars, sets, and accessories. K-Line branded trains today are being marketed and distributed by Lionel.

Lionel Corp. Established by Joshua Lionel Cowen in 1900, it first made electric trains in 2½-inch gauge. Six years later, Lionel brought out its first Standard gauge trains; it expanded into O gauge in 1915 with a line that included accessories. The firm abandoned Standard

gauge after 1939. Both O and O-27 gauge flourished during the postwar era (1945-69). Starting in 1970, two divisions of General Mills (Model Products Corp. and then Fundimensions) produced Lionel trains under a special agreement. In 1986, Richard Kughn gained control of the line and formed Lionel Trains Inc. He sold the line to Wellspring Associates in 1995. That New York-based investment firm oversees Lionel LLC and its production of Lionel trains.

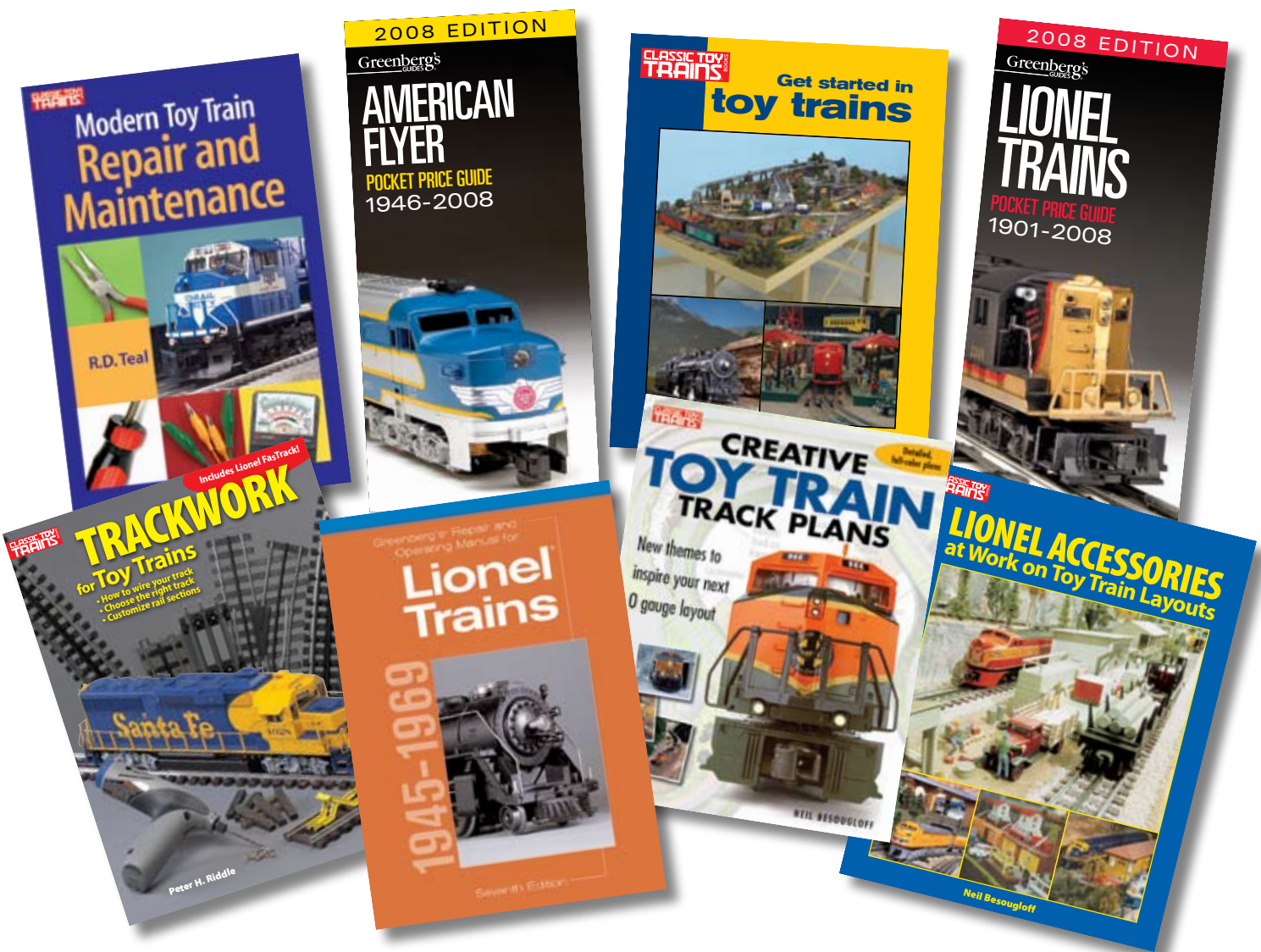
Louis Marx & Co. This toy giant entered the train field in 1928 when it first marketed the Joy Line of windup trains made by Girard Model Works. It expanded to electric O-27 trains two years later and sold them under the Marx name after 1934. As a low-cost alternative, Marx trains took off in the 1940s and '50s, but eventually fell on hard times. Quaker Oats Co. purchased the line in 1972 and sold it to a British firm four years later. In 1993 a new enterprise known as Marx Trains revived the line; today those reproductions are sold under the Ameritrains brand.

MTH Electric Trains. This firm traces its beginning to 1983, when founder Mike Wolf bought equipment to manufacture Standard gauge trains from Williams Electric Trains. Since then, his operation has mushroomed, with an O gauge line making its debut 10 years later. The MTH Premier line showcases top-level O gauge locomotives and rolling stock. Its RailKing line focuses on semi-scale models. MTH also makes reproductions of Standard and Wide gauge trains and accessories.

S-Helper Service. This company helped revive S gauge in the years after 1989. It now offers a full line of locomotives, freight and passenger cars, and track, all of which are compatible with American Flyer trains.

Weaver Models. Begun in 1965 to make HO scale kits, it started releasing O gauge freight cars in 1980. Six years later, Weaver offered its first locomotive. Since then, the company's roster of steam and diesel engines has grown, supplemented by freight and passenger cars. Unlike most toy train companies, Weaver still makes some of its trains in the United States instead of relying fully on Asian manufacturers.

Williams Electric Trains. Developed to reproduce Standard gauge models in 1972, it soon broadened its line to include O gauge locomotives. Today Williams concentrates on marketing value-priced O gauge trains and reproductions of postwar Lionel locomotives and cars.



Toy Train Terms

Accessory: Non-train item used in conjunction with toy trains: signals, stations, freight loaders, tunnels, bridges, etc.

Collector: Toy train enthusiast who acquires vintage or contemporary models to display or study.

Gauge: The distance between the running rails of model train track.

Hi-railer: Model railroader who operates toy trains in highly detailed settings with scenery and structures.

Layout: Model railroad of any size, including track and a power source.

Modern-era: Descriptive term for toy trains manufactured in 1970 or later.

Operator: Toy train enthusiast who acquires vintage or contemporary models to repair, restore, or run on track.

Postwar: Descriptive term for toy trains manufactured between 1945 and 1969.

Prewar: Descriptive term for toy trains made in 1942 or earlier in the 20th century.

Reproduction: Toy train patterned after an antique that is long out of production.

Restoration: Toy train returned to its original condition by carefully repairing and repainting it.

Scale: Proportion or comparative ratio of a model's measurements to the dimensions of the full-sized train ("prototype") on which it is based.

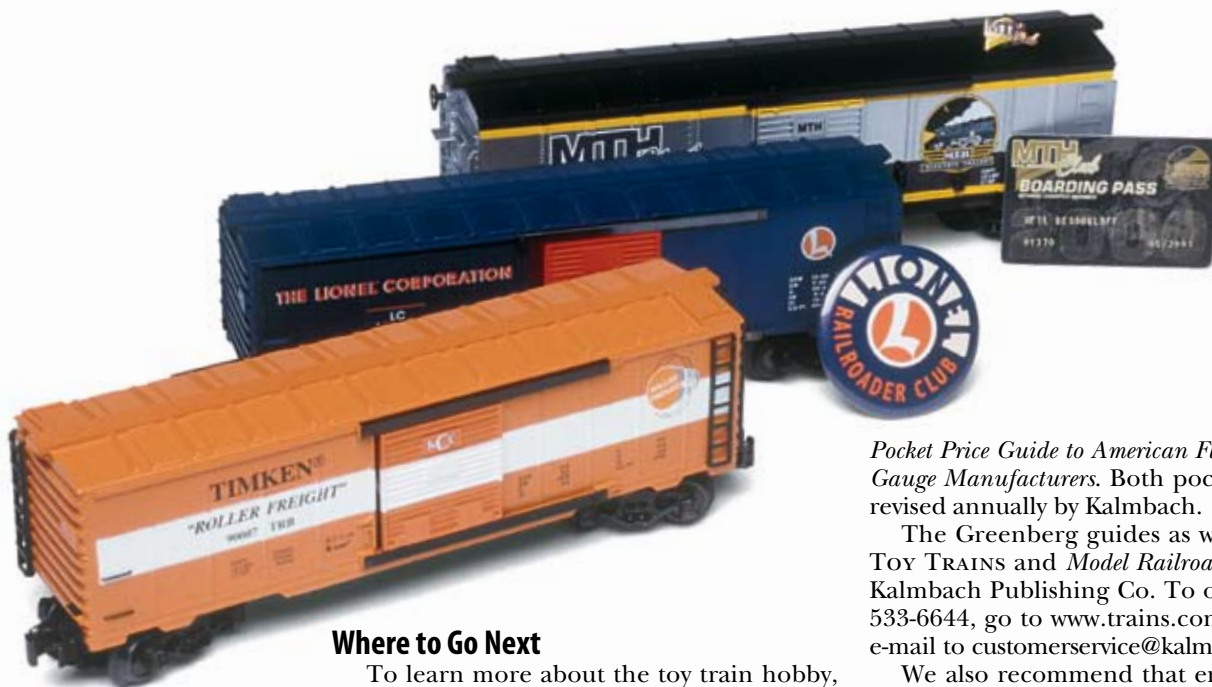
Tinplate: Descriptive term for any toy train; to be precise, it refers to models made of tin-plated steel.

Transformer: Electrical device that reduces 110-volt household current to lower voltages used to power toy trains.

Variation: Model whose minor differences in color, lettering, or detail distinguish it from otherwise identical models.

Windup: Toy locomotive that uses a coil spring for power, usually wound by hand with a removable key; also known as "mechanical" or "clockwork."

The information contained in the latest toy train price guides and reference books will enhance your enjoyment of the hobby, regardless of whether you consider yourself a collector or an operator.



ABOVE: There are a number of good reasons to join the clubs that are sponsored by national toy train collecting and operating groups as well as current manufacturers. The special models shown above and the magazines below are among the benefits members enjoy.

Where to Go Next

To learn more about the toy train hobby, we recommend reading books and magazines and contacting toy train associations. *CLASSIC TOY TRAINS*, which comes out nine times a year, covers the hobby for operators and collectors. *O Gauge Railroading*, which is published seven times annually, appeals to operators. *S Gaugian* reaches S gauge enthusiasts six times a year. *Model Railroader*, a monthly publication, focuses on the smaller HO and N scales.

The best introduction to the operating side of the hobby is *Get Started in Toy Trains* from Kalmbach Publishing Co. It provides easy-to-read explanations of every aspect of building a toy train layout. Also useful are two books by Robert Schleicher: *The Big Book of Lionel* and *The Lionel FasTrack Book*, published by MBI.

Collectors interested in Lionel trains should take a look at two books by David Doyle that are put out by Krause Publications: *Standard Catalog of Lionel Trains, 1900-1942* and *Standard Catalog of Lionel Trains, 1945-1969*. They will also want to consult *Greenberg's Pocket Price Guide to Lionel Trains*. Hobbyists interested in S gauge trains will find useful listings in *Greenberg's*

Pocket Price Guide to American Flyer and Other S Gauge Manufacturers. Both pocket guides are revised annually by Kalmbach.

The Greenberg guides as well as *CLASSIC TOY TRAINS* and *Model Railroader* are sold by Kalmbach Publishing Co. To order, call 800-533-6644, go to www.trains.com, or direct an e-mail to customerservice@kalmbach.com.

We also recommend that enthusiasts look into any of the associations for collectors and operators. The oldest and largest of these organizations is the Train Collectors Association (P.O. Box 248, Paradise Ln., Strasburg, PA 17579), followed by the Toy Train Operating Society (25 W. Walnut St., Ste. 308, Pasadena, CA 91103). Both cover all aspects of the hobby, publish newsletters and magazines for members, and sponsor annual national conventions.

Brand-specific clubs are the Lionel Collectors Club of America (P.O. Box 479, La Salle, IL 61301) and Lionel Operating Train Society (6376 W. Fork Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45247), plus the Marx Train Collectors Club (P.O. Box 111, Bakerstown, PA 15007). S gauge hobbyists will be interested in the National Association of S Gaugers (280 Gordon Rd., Matawan, NJ 07747). These clubs also publish magazines, sponsor national conventions, and help members buy and sell trains.

Groups sponsored by current manufacturers include Atlas O Golden Spike Club (378 Florence Ave., Hillside, NJ, 07205), Lionel Railroaders Club (P.O. Box 748, New Baltimore, MI 48047), Marx Trains Advantage (367 W. Irving Park Rd., No. 338, Wood Dale, IL 60191), MTH Railroaders Club (7020 Columbia Gateway Dr., Columbia, MD 21046), Weaver Collector's Station (P.O. Box 231, Northumberland, PA 17857), and Williams Platinum Club (835-F Columbia 100 Parkway, Columbia, MD 21045). These different groups offer benefits for members that range from newsletters and catalogs to opportunities to buy special models not available elsewhere.

Finally, those of you with access to the Internet will want to consult www.trains.com. This website is loaded with information about toy trains and any other kind of train, real or model. Browsers can find news about the latest products, train show schedules, webcams, videos, how-to stories, and more. Visitors can participate in several Internet forums, including one that's specific to toy trains.





ABOVE: One of the neat aspects of building a toy train layout is that you can make it as realistic or as imaginative as you want. Or, as this scene shows, you can have it both ways. Amid the dramatic landscape of the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California you discover an O gauge Atlantic Coast Line streamliner and Canadian National Rail Diesel Cars. Those aren't road names customarily observed in the Golden State.



LEFT: The future of the toy train hobby will be dominated by sophisticated electronic control and sound systems, scale locomotives, and realistic scenery, all of which highlight this O gauge layout. MTH rules the day, with its Santa Fe SD90 easing through a curve with Weaver and Lionel freight cars behind. About to greet it is a New York Central passenger express led by a USRA 2-8-2 pulling Williams cars.