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The benefits of club membership

Are you a member of a toy train organization? Our hobby is fortunate to have several large groups – the Lionel Collectors Club of America (LCCA), the Lionel Operating Train Society (LOTS), and the Train Collectors Association (TCA). There are also regional and local clubs across North America and overseas.

Clubs provide numerous benefits. Probably the best opportunity is meeting fellow enthusiasts. Many clubs have a central location with an expansive layout, where members can run their own equipment.

The advantages of membership don't end there. Many clubs host community events, open houses, and public service projects, such as setting up a layout at a senior center or library, or host displays at local shows.

Let's say you don't like changing traction tires on your engines. You may find a club member who enjoys that task. You can swap for a project that maybe he or she doesn't enjoy. You both win.

We at *Classic Toy Trains* have a good relationship with the Milwaukee Lionel Railroad Club. At a recent visit to the group's clubhouse for a photo shoot (see my note below about our special issue), I talked with some members about their outreach efforts. They encourage newcomers and especially youngsters to join the hobby, and members will sell bundles of used rolling stock and equipment at a low price point to help people get started. Another win.

If you're not a member of a club, I encourage you to join one. Many members are unsung heroes promoting the hobby. I applaud their efforts!



I visited the Milwaukee Lionel Railroad Club clubhouse and layout. David Popp photo

Rene Schweitzer

Rene Schweitzer, Editor

Feel free to send comments and questions to editor@ClassicToyTrains.com



INCOMING - OUR NEXT SPECIAL ISSUE! Senior Editor Roger Carp and I are currently working on our next all-new special issue, due out in mid-October. We're calling it *Great Layouts You Can Visit!* Read stories about 15 layouts that are open to the public across the country, plus get an updated list of 90+ locations and a handy reference map. Visit shop.trains.com or call 877-243-9403 to preorder your copy.



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CLASSIC TOY TRAINS

OUR MISSION

Classic Toy Trains is the indispensable source for toy train hobbyists. Our mission is to enhance our readers' enjoyment of the toy train hobby by publishing useful information and engaging insights about layouts, how-to projects, and hobby news and heritage.

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Hudson Products Co. developed a close replica of Lionel's No. 700E scale Hudson steam engine and tender in the 1970s.

Legacy of Hudson Products

The Hudson Products conversion kit No. HPCT200 that was described in the Questions & Answers column in the Spring 2025 issue of *Classic Toy Trains* was intended to add detail to boilers used on Lionel Nos. 773, 726, and 736 steam engines. The kit did not come with any drive rod/valve gear enhancements.

As to the Hudson Products Co., its reproduction No. 700E /5344 model was an attempt to fill a demand not being met during the 1970s and early 1980s by Model Products Corp. and Fundimensions, the divisions of General Mills that were manufacturing and marketing Lionel trains during the early modern era. My father purchased an original Lionel No. 700E scale New York

Central Hudson in 1981. Years later I went to work on it because I wanted to install a new chassis from a Lionel No. 18002/785 Hudson. It fit like a glove! All the tapped holes & bosses lined up perfectly. With the exception of a little grinding in the motor area (the newer Lionel motors are larger than their prewar predecessors), it runs superbly!

The Hudson Products model is a close representation of Lionel's prewar scale Hudson, and it's distinguished by the lack of Lionel data on the boiler. I wish my dad could see it run. Hudson Products went bankrupt soon after, but to its credit it kept an open line of communication with my dad. — *Dick Slazak*

Please keep Questions & Answers!

I read Rene Schweitzer's Editor's Note in the Spring 2025 issue regarding the Questions & Answers column. Well, all I can say is: "Please keep it going!"

I have been buying Lionel "clunkers" for the past 20 years in hopes of fixing them up and reselling them (usually at a loss) in an effort to keep these toys out of our landfills. I never quit learning from the answers in CTT provided by toy train expert Joseph Mania. He is an extremely valuable asset to our entire hobby!

Don't worry if the same question appears in print again and again. I think that just proves we in the hobby have a need for basic information. Repeating any answers only helps us relearn some essential repair techniques. — *Glenn Greaver*

Keep Weekend Workshop, too

I subscribe to *Classic Toy Trains* to get answers to repair trains handed down to me by my stepdad. It is important and helpful that you keep offering this support as a full-service model railroading publication. Also, your featuring one specific

item in Weekend Workshop has been incredibly helpful to me. CTT should remain a trusted source for new and old hobbyists who may not know where to look for help in restoring and repairing trains and accessories. — *Keith Jordan*

Another Flyer set

Roger Carp did a nice job looking at American Flyer No. 631 Texas & Pacific gondolas in the Fall 2024 CTT. One mistake, though. He stated that only one set cataloged in 1952 (the No. 5107W) included a 631 gondola. Not so, as set No. 5004 headed by a No. 342 Nickel Plate Road 0-8-0 steamer came with a 631. I should know because it was the first set I received as a boy. — *Tom Crittenden*

Paint for trains

I wrote to request paint for one of my engines. I found that Henning's Trains has a great Collector Color Chart. It is the best color chart I've seen. — *Eugene Davilla*

Preferring postwar

Despite my electronics undergraduate degree and decades as a licensed amateur

radio operator, I would never dream of trying to repair the electronics in today's O gauge trains. Like many new products, they seem to be designed so a consumer cannot repair them. Locomotives and transformers from the postwar era run beautifully and were built to last. Parts for them are plentiful. There's no greater joy than resurrecting a postwar model at home on a tiny budget. Bad news for the manufacturers and vendors who promote the complex and costly high-tech items but great news for us frugal people who love the hobby. — *Michael C. Migliaccio*

Update from West Virginia

Thanks for including the Mid-Ohio Valley Model Railroad Club in Parkersburg, W. Va., in the "Toy Train Layouts You Can Visit" feature in the Winter 2024 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*. Just wanted to let your readers know that our club no longer has an S gauge layout, but our O gauge layout has been expanded. We now have five open houses each year and always invite CTT readers to visit. They can obtain more information by calling 304-428-6143. Many thanks! — *Mark Suek*

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18160	138115 New York Central FT ABAs.....	375.00
18226	General Electric Dash-9 ST 'O' size.....	250.00
18235	BNFS Dash-9 Pair.....	595.00
18245	148 Pennsylvania PA Alco ABAs.....	495.00
18286	Union Pacific Dash-9-44CW 'Scale'.....	325.00
18313	PRR Green Solid Stripe GG-1.....	195.00
18322	Lackawanna (Maroon Top) Trainmaster.....	395.00
18328	134 New Haven MU Passenger 4-Car Set.....	495.00
18340	Fairbanks Morse Scale Trainmaster Pair.....	595.00
18343	Pennsylvania #2332 Black GG-1.....	495.00
18356	Penn Central Scale GG-1 (test-run).....	995.00
18370	Virginian Blue & Yellow FM.....	295.00
18892	PWC Burlington GP-7.....	225.00
24500	Denver & Rio Grande PA Alco 'AA' (Scale).....	495.00
24534	138 Erie-Lackawanna F-3 ABAs (Scale).....	895.00
24579	183 New York Central ET 7ABA's.....	895.00
25858	PWC Pennsylvania EP-5.....	295.00
28540	Baltimore & Ohio S-2 (Scale).....	325.00
28540	Union Pacific SD40T-2 (Scale).....	325.00
38176	Pennsylvania FA 'AA' (Scale).....	425.00
52315	Pennsylvania FM (Scale).....	300.00
58600	Santa Fe Blue & Yellow Alco 'AA'.....	395.00

LIONEL 21" PASSENGER CARS

2027280	AutoTrain Vista Vision Dome Car.....	175.00
2027630	Lionel 120th VistaVision Dome Car.....	190.00
2027690	Lionel 120th Vision Baggage Car.....	175.00
2027760	Lionel 120th StationSound Diner.....	175.00
2127330	CSX Southwestern Sound Diner.....	249.95
2127370	CSX Business StationSound Diner.....	249.95

LIONEL HEAVYWEIGHT CARS

19079	New York Central 2-Tone 4-Car Set.....	295.00
15526	14245 Santa Fe 'The Chief' 7-Car Set.....	795.00
15577	8/21 New York Central 4-Car Set.....	395.00
1927110	Southern Pacific 18" Coach 2pk #1.....	299.95
1927252	Penn Central B60 Baggage Car #7551.....	99.95
1927510	Missouri Pacific Sunshine Spl. 2pk #1.....	239.95
1927520	Missouri Pacific Sunshine Spl. 2pk #2.....	239.95
2127200	Penn Central B60 Baggage Car #7705.....	99.95
2127210	Penn Central B60 Baggage Car #7630.....	99.95
2127290	NYC 60' Scale Baggage Car.....	99.95
2127490	GM&O 18" Passenger 2-pack 'A'.....	214.95

LIONEL PASSENGER CARS/SETS

7220	to 25 Illinois Central 15' Alum. 6-Cars.....	395.00
9569	to 75,720 PRR 15' Alum. 8-Cars.....	695.00
9594	to 95,987/707 NYC 15' Alum. 6-Cars.....	395.00
15340	PRR 15' Aluminum 6-Car Set.....	495.00
16050	to 54 C&NW Baby Madison 5-Car Set.....	195.00
16091	New York Central Baby Madison 4-Cars.....	159.95
18306	10 Pennsylvania MU 4-Car Set.....	395.00
18506	12 Canadian National Budd 4-Car Set.....	350.00
19061	Wabash Madison 4-Car Set.....	195.00
19109	Southern Pacific Madison Baggage.....	95.00
19047	to 50 B&O Green 4-Car Baby Madison Set.....	175.00
19074	Legends of Madison COMPLETE 10-cars.....	695.00
19096	Legends of Madison 2-Car Addons.....	175.00
19100	to 06 Amtrak 15' Alum. 7-Car Set.....	395.00
19116	to 02 Great Northern 15' Alum. 5-Car Set.....	395.00
19139	to 44 N&W 15' Alum. Smooth 6/Cars.....	395.00
19140	N&W 15' Alum. Combo (smooth).....	45.00
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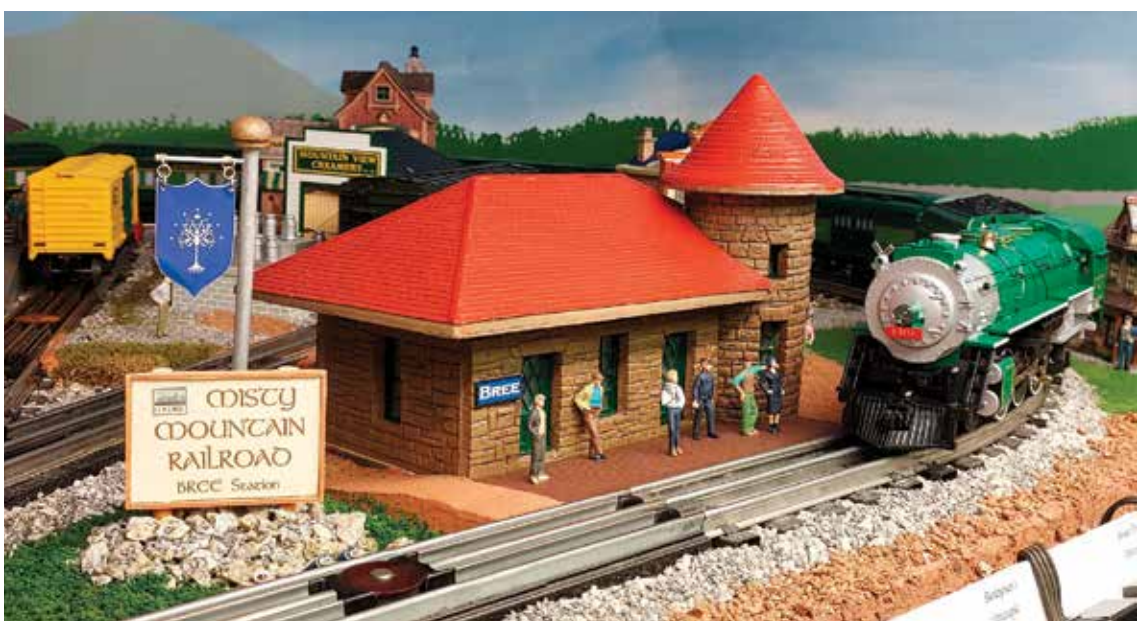
► Frank Spada's S gauge model railroad

Autumn means school starts again for youngsters across the country, including Lindenhurst, N.Y., where longtime S gauge modeler Frank Spada continues to spruce up his American Flyer layout. The careful driver of the bus has crossed over the busy grade crossing before a No. 293 New Haven 4-6-2 Pacific runs by with several green heavyweight passenger cars behind. Frank, like many postwar enthusiasts, has filled his layout with classic accessories, including the Nos. 772 Checkerboard Water Tower, 785 Coal Loader, 23780 Gabe the Lamplighter, and 24550 Piggyback Loader and Unloader.



► Bernard Campbell's O gauge layout

Your first look at the photograph Bernard Campbell shot of a favorite scene on his O gauge Misty Mountain RR leaves you believing you're admiring a rural depot served by the Southern Ry. However, our imaginative host set his 20 x 22-foot three-rail layout not in Georgia or North Carolina but in a magical land populated by human beings, dwarves, and hobbits. That's right! Bernard is fascinated by J.R.R. Tolkien's masterpiece, *The Lord of the Rings*, and so made that saga the basis of his layout. Bree Station is a town east of the Shire and near the Great East Road.





► Eric Beheim's O gauge model railroad

Marx aficionado Eric Beheim puts tremendous thought into the images he submits to *Classic Toy Trains*, so it came as no surprise that the Marx No. 1998 Union Pacific S3 diesel switcher pulling the desirable No. 355 Santa Fe stockcar complemented the orange and yellow leaves on the trees nearby. Eric has assembled a portfolio of color pictures he's created by posing prewar and postwar Marx trains and accessories on dioramas skillfully placed outdoors not far from his home in Descanso, Calif. In fact, Eric puts together a spectacular calendar of Marx photos every year.



▲ Larken Parr's O gauge layout

Even after shooting this beautifully balanced and peaceful picture of a CSX Electro-Motive GP38-2 road diesel leading a few tank cars over a crossover, Larken Parr can't quite believe the cows in the pasture remained calm and still. He was fearful the K-Line No. K2412-2702 locomotive might blast its horn and cause the frightened herd to stampede out of range. Maybe the constant buzz from the Lionel No. 394 Rotating Beacon soothed the cows. Whatever the reason, we're thrilled that Larken managed to provide this delightful picture of his 6 x 12-foot O gauge layout, which is located in a barn on his property in Lawtey, Fla.

Send your very best pictures of toy train subjects to CTT Photo Album, 18650 W. Corporate Dr., Ste. 103, Brookfield, WI 53045. Be sure to include your name, address, and daytime telephone number; a description of each image, including the gauge and make of the train; and the name of the photographer or layout owner if he or she is someone other than you.

Digital photographs must be taken with the camera set at the largest-possible file size. Digital photos can be submitted on a disk or CD or emailed to photoalbum@ClassicToyTrains.com. If you send us a photo and it is published, we will pay you \$50 as long as we have not previously bought the photo.

For help on taking pictures, please go to trains.com/ctt/magazine/contributor-guidelines. Doing so will lead you to a number of thoughtful tips and suggestions for improving your photographic skills as well as assistance with depth-of-field, lighting, and composition.



▲ Jim Martin's O gauge layout

The sun has just set and the crew in charge of the Chicago & North Western GP7 road diesel (MTH RailKing No. 30-20187) would rather be enjoying supper at the station at Woodside Junction than shuttling freight cars after a long day in this Illinois town. But, as layout owner Jim Martin points out, the engineer and his co-workers have one last job to do, and they must get it done. Nothing out of the ordinary on the North Central Lines, as Jim named the O gauge layout he's been constructing since switching from HO scale almost 30 years ago, right after moving into a new house in Bloomingdale, Ill.



◀ David Hobbs' O gauge model railroad

Leaves filling trees on the upper level of David Hobbs' entertaining 9 x 19-foot layout have started to change color as fall arrives in 1954. Dave decided to model the steam-to-diesel transition era on the three-rail display he's been working on at home in Canton, Ohio, for the past 25 years. A devoted O gauger since receiving a Lionel set more than 60 years ago, Dave has passed down his love of the hobby to his grandson, Jacob, whose favorite railroad is the Union Pacific. Now you know why Dave picked out the MTH RailKing No. 33-2010-1 F3s to photograph as they emerged from the MTH reissue of Lionel's No. 300 Hell Gate Bridge and passed the MTH No. 30-9147 Pennsylvania RR Operating Watchman's Shanty.



◀ Robert Winkler's O gauge layout

What started as a Christmas display for Robert Winkler and his family to watch in operation beneath their decorated tree has evolved over the years into a permanent 6 x 14-foot O gauge layout that Bob runs 12 months a year to entertain himself and his grandkids. He admits to a strong preference for the colorful tinplate trains and accessories associated with the pre-World War II era. Bob snapped this photo at his home in Vernon, Conn., of an MTH Tinplate Traditions No. 10-3028-1 update of a Lionel No. 256 electric-profile locomotive dolled up in blue while it pulled a few two-tone green passenger cars. The train is passing a reissue of Lionel's classic No. 438 Signal Tower. Elsewhere, you can glimpse a Lionel No. 300 Hell Gate Bridge plus a number of buildings from the Department 56 and Lemax product lines.

NEWS BITS

■ Trainz buys Lionel parts

Trainz has acquired all the Lionel TrainMaster Command Control and modular Legacy conventional reverse and sound printed circuit boards (PCBs). These parts include Odyssey 1 motor drivers, Legacy motor drivers, R2LCs, R4LCs, and RailSounds 2.0, 2.5, 3.0, 4.0, 4E, 5.0, 5.5 and 6.0.

Trainz has also acquired conventional reverse units for AC and DC motors, as well as conventional sound units for steam, diesel and electric locomotives.

Quantities and prices vary. Visit the parts section of Trainz.com and apply filters to see what's available.

■ Congratulations

Joseph Calio, a well-known O gauge modeler and supporter of *Classic Toy Trains*, was named Most Enthusiastic Member of the Train Collectors Association at its recent national convention held in Jacksonville, Fla. We send our congratulations to Joseph and his family.

■ Future of American Flyer line

I am a print subscriber to *Classic Toy Trains*. Have you reported on the discontinuation of the American Flyer model train line by Lionel? Thanks for any information you can provide. — George Konder

I contacted Lionel, and they confirmed there are no plans to discontinue production of the American Flyer line of S gauge trains. They will continue to produce a few new pieces per year. In May, I interviewed CEO Howard Hitchcock and asked him about the future of S gauge and Lionel. Trains.com members can watch that video to learn more. — Rene Schweitzer

■ In memoriam: Milinda Griggs

Milinda Diane Griggs passed away on Wednesday, May 21, 2025. She was 68.

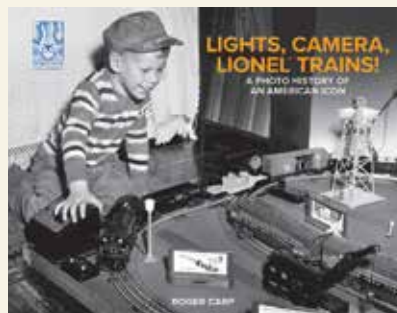
Milinda was born in Findlay, Ohio, and had resided in Georgia for the past 31 years, most recently in Flowery Branch. She and her husband, Scott, had been married for 45 years and were business owners for the past 50 years. Whether it was working at train shows, sorting parts, or dressing up for work events, she was there with a big smile. Trainz.com would not be where it is today

without her hard work and continuous support.

We at *Classic Toy Trains* offer the Griggs family our deepest condolences.

■ In memoriam: Donald Shaw

Donald Shaw, lifelong train collector and founder of the Train Station in Mountain Lakes, N.J., died on February 28, 2025 at the age of 94. Don established in 1974 what has grown to become one of the top Lionel dealers in the country as a way to share his passion for Lionel trains. *Classic Toy Trains* featured Don and the generations of his family running the Train Station in the November 2017 issue. We extend our condolences to the Shaw family.



■ Lights, Camera, Lionel Trains! wins awards

Senior Editor Roger Carp's latest book, *Lights, Camera, Lionel Trains! A Photo History of an American Icon*, has won several awards.

The title won Gold for Best Coffee Table Book from the National Indie Excellence Book Awards; Silver for Best History from the Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA); Silver for Best Coffee Table Book from IBPA, Silver for Best Cover Design for IBPA, and Silver for Best Pop Culture book from the Independent Publisher Book Awards.

Lights, Camera, Lionel Trains! A Photo History of an American Icon showcases 100 captivating photo essays that chronicle how Lionel electric trains became a beloved and influential symbol of American culture in the 20th century. It's published by Project Roar Publishing.

To order a copy of the book, visit shop.trains.com or projectroar.com



■ Thomas the Tank Engine documentary debuts at UK rail event

Thomas the Tank Engine is the subject of a new documentary. *An Unlikely Fandom: The Impact of Thomas the Tank Engine* premiered at this summer's The Greatest Gathering event in Derby, England.

The documentary film explores the influence of the beloved television series on popular culture and its enduring legacy. It also explains the origins of Thomas, its global impact, and its passionate community of fans.

Thomas began his adventures in a book published in 1945, the first in Reverend W. Awdry's *The Railway Series*. These stories were later adapted into a live-action television show that debuted in 1984. The premiere coincides with the 80th anniversary of the franchise and the 200th anniversary of the modern railway.

To learn more about this film, visit alstom.com/greatest-gathering.

■ LCCA founder celebrates 90th birthday at event

Jim Gates, founder of the Lionel Collectors Club of America (LCCA), celebrated his 90th birthday on June 25. He started the club in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1970.

Reflecting on LCCA's long and inspiring history, Jim said he knew there were many Lionel train collectors and operators out there. "I never dreamed the LCCA would grow so big," he said. LCCA President Mark Kempfer attended Jim's party and presented him with the club's 2025 convention giraffe car to commemorate Jim's 90th birthday, Lionel's 125th anniversary, and the LCCA's 55th anniversary.

When asked what he saw for the future of the club, Jim responded, "Collectors will always love Lionel! And the club is a good way to make new friends, and for many the conventions become family vacations."



Freight haulers: Menards has released three new O gauge boxcars: a New Haven State of Maine Boxcar (No. 275-9418), a Union Pacific Boxcar (No. 2759420, shown), and a Norfolk & Western Boxcar (No. 2759428). Each boxcar is uniquely numbered and features O-27 operation. **Price:** \$24.99 each. **Website:** menards.com/trains

Cool caboose: Menards is selling an O gauge Norfolk & Western Lighted Caboose (No. 2759434). The caboose has alternating, rear, red LED lights and features O-27 operation. **Price:** \$29.99. **Website:** menards.com/trains



New from Neal: O gauge modeler Neal Schorr offers seven ways to improve realism on your layout in the September 2025 issue of *Model Railroader*. **Price:** \$7.99. Order from shop. trains.com, check with your hobby shop, or call 877-246-4879.



Heavy-duty haulers: MTH Electric Trains, 7393 Washington Blvd., Ste. 101, Elkridge, MD 21075, has announced SD60 Diesel Locomotives as part of the RailKing line. The engines feature Proto-Sound 3.0, O-31 operation, and onboard DCC/DCS decoder (No. 30-21334 shown). Expected delivery in December 2025. **Price:** \$479.95. **Website:** mthtrains.com

Colorful cars: Ready Made Toys (RMT) has several new O gauge products, including a Reading & Northern tank car in either green or black (RMT-96812-2, RMT-96812-3), a Quebec North Shore & Labrador ore car (RMT-96799-03) and a U.S. Navy Battleship New Jersey boxcar (RMT-96432-5, shown). **Price:** \$39.95 each. To order or purchase, contact your local hobby store or retailer. **Website:** readymadetoys.com



Peppy Pacific: Mr. Muffin's Trains, 165 E. Main St., Atlanta IN 46031, has announced a 4-6-2 USRA Heavy Pacific Steam Locomotive as part of the Premier line. The engine features a steaming quillable whistle, Proto-Sound 3.0, and O-42 operation (No. 20-3983). Expected delivery in October 2025. **Price:** \$1,399.95. **Website:** mrmuffintrains.com

Shop.Trains.com

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GREAT LAYOUTS YOU CAN VISIT!

Classic Toy Trains' latest special-interest publication features 15 layouts you can visit across the United States, including the The Choo Choo Barn, the Milwaukee Lionel Railroad Club, the Naples Lionel Train Museum, the Illinois Railway Museum, and many more. Plus, find a handy reference map and the entire list of public layouts. The issue will be available in mid-October. **Order from shop.trains.com or call 877-243-4903.**



TRAINS.COM HOODIE

Show your love for your favorite website with a Trains.com hoodie! A soft and comfy unisex hoodie made from 52% airlume combed ring-spun cotton and 48% poly fleece. Available in black, navy blue, and white from sizes S to 2XL. **Price: \$60.50.**

EXCITING NEWS! The Trains.com store now offers an in-depth line of Lionel products, from train sets to rolling stock, locomotives, and gifts. Visit shop.trains.com/pages/lionel to see what's available.



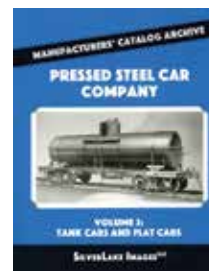
Frosty liquid: Legacy Station, 4153 Lawrenceville Highway, Ste. 12, Lilburn, GA 30047, announces a custom-run MTH Industrial Water Tower as part of the RailKing line (No. 30-90743). The O gauge tower features holiday graphics and a flashing beacon light (power supply not included). Expected delivery in October 2025. **Price:** \$84.95. **Website:** legacystation.com



Holiday haulers: Trainworld, 751 McDonald Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11218, is selling two custom-run MTH O gauge Christmas cars as part of the RailKing line. The Christmas Gondola Car features lighted snowmen and is available in two car numbers (No. 30-72265, shown). The Christmas Flat Car has Santa Claus with a sleigh and reindeer and is available in two car numbers (No. 30-76953). Both cars require O-27 curves for operation. Expected delivery is October 2025. **Website:** trainworld.com

Sleek beauties: Atlas Model Railroad Co., Inc, 378 Florence Ave. Hillside, NJ 07205, has released streamlined passenger cars as part of the Premier line. The O gauge cars feature LED lighting and end-of-car diaphragms, and they have O-42 operation. **Price:** single car, \$119.95; 2-pack, \$249.95; 4-pack, \$499.95. **Website:** shop.atlasrr.com

More archive treasures: Ron's Books, PO Box 714, Harrison, NY, 10528, is selling several new books as part of its Manufacturers' Catalog Archive line. Titles include *Plymouth Locomotives, Volume 3: Gasoline Locomotives; Pressed Steel Car Company, Volume 2: Tank Cars & Flat Cars; and Passenger, Freight & Work Equipment on the Delaware & Hudson 1823-1927*. **Price:** \$45 each. **Website:** ronsbooks.com



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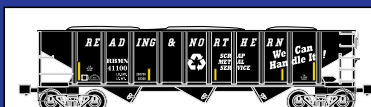
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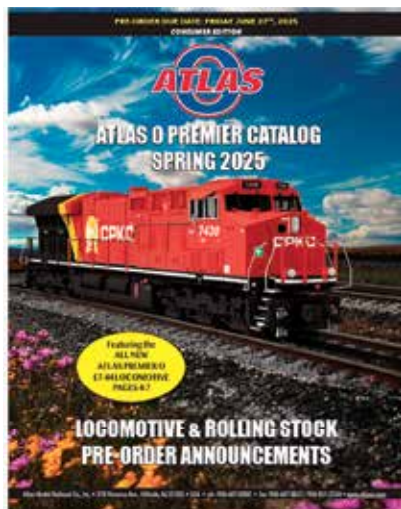
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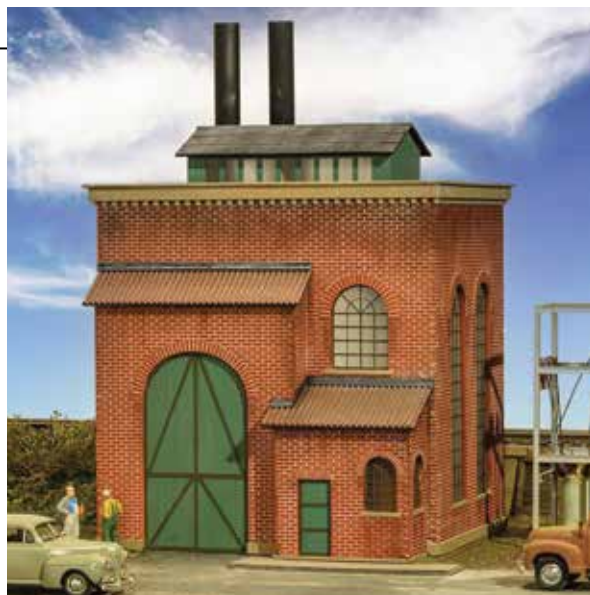
Premier power: Atlas Model Railroad Co., Inc., 378 Florence Ave., Hillside, NJ 07205, has announced a three-rail ET44AC diesel locomotive as part of the Premier O line. The engine features Proto-Sound 3.0, onboard DCC/DCS decoder, detachable snowplow, and O-42 operation. **Price:** \$799.95. **Website:** shop.atlasrr.com



Colorful freight: The Nassau Lionel Operating Engineers (NLOE) has a custom-run Lionel flatcar with trailers. The car features O-36 operation and operating couplers. **Price:** \$159.99 plus shipping. Purchasers will automatically be enrolled as an associate member of NLOE. Order from nloe-store.onlineweb.shop or mail a check to PO Box 343, Levittown, NY 11756.



New Atlas O catalog: The Atlas O Premier Catalog — Spring 2025 was published in late May on the manufacturer's website. Highlights include a new ET44 locomotive, a new E6 locomotive, new paint schemes for the SD40-2 locomotive, and much more. View the entire catalog at shop.atlasrr.com.



More power: Brennan's Model Railroading introduces the Garfield Electric Substation. This O scale laser-cut kit has a 8" x 7.5" footprint and is the first in the firm's Signature Series. Figures, vehicles, and sky backdrop not included. Expected delivery in summer 2025. **Price:** \$159.95. **Website:** brennansmodelrr.com



Dashing diesel: MTH Electric Trains, 7393 Washington Blvd. Ste. 101, Elkridge, MD 21075, is selling an RS-11 Diesel Locomotive as part of the Premier line. The O gauge locomotive features Proto-Sound 3.0, onboard DCC/DCS decoder, O-31 operation, and more (No. 20-22061 shown). Expected delivery October 2025. **Price:** \$649.95. **Website:** mthtrains.com

LCCA MEMBERSHIP PRICE INCREASES

The Lionel Collectors Club of America has announced increases to its membership fees.

In a recent LCCA email newsletter, the group announced that rising prices from vendors have affected expenses. Effective August 1, 2025, membership prices will change to:

Regular Membership: \$48 annually

Electronic Membership: \$30 annually

Junior Membership: \$30 per annually

Foreign Membership: \$48 per annually plus \$14 postage surcharge

Visit the website at lionelcollectors.org to learn more.

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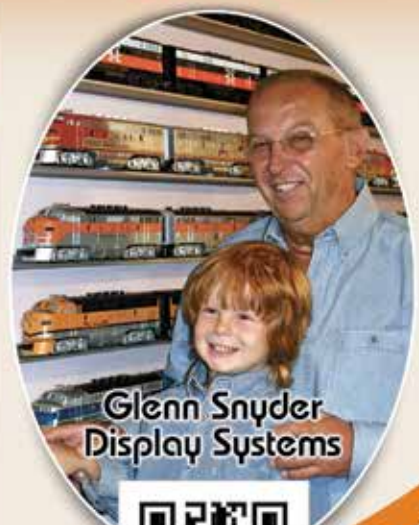


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Cleaning postwar rolling stock

BENEFITS OF SOAP AND WATER



Rolling stock manufactured during the postwar era, like the Lionel Nos. 2454 Boxcar and 3454 Automatic Merchandise Car, clean up easily with warm water and dishwashing soap. Just use care when rubbing so you don't remove paint.



Q I was at a toy train show not that long ago and bought some old Lionel rolling stock. The cars are dirty. How do I safely clean them? — *E. Layne Katz*

A Most of the time just a simple bath in warm water and a very mild dishwashing soap will be enough to do the trick. It is prudent to test the metal or plastic body shells first because many of the paints that were used for American Flyer, Lionel, and Marx trains during the postwar era can be damaged during cleaning. Use extra care when cleaning Lionel F3s and Flyer Alco PAs painted silver. The same is true with many O and S gauge passenger cars. Improper cleaning can turn them gray.

Pilots on Williams GG1

Q Not too long ago I bought a Williams by Bachmann GG1 electric-profile locomotive. It runs great, but the pilots hang down too low and occasionally cause sparks and short out on my tubular track. How can I raise the pilots? Or should I grind off some of the metal pilot? What do you suggest? — *John Blazek*

A I would first check that the pilots have been mounted properly. Take the truck off and place it on the track. If it is still touching the rails, the truck may be distorted. If it's working all right, then it may have the wrong mounting screw. That would raise the rear of the truck and cause the front to be lower. If the truck is bent or distorted I wouldn't advise trying to bend it back into shape. Instead, I would do as you have suggested — grind just enough away to alleviate the problem.

Converting MTH diesel to TMCC

Q I picked up an MTH RailKing Santa Fe Dash-8 road diesel from 1995-96 that seems to have been outfitted with Proto-Sound 1.0. I would like to convert it to Lionel TrainMaster Command Control. Is this even possible? — *James Huff*

A The conversion from conventional control to command control is indeed possible. The Electric Railroad Company (ERR, now owned by 3rd Rail) is the only vendor that offers TMCC upgrade boards. To learn more about this business and the products it offers so you can determine which is best for your project, go to www.3rdrail.com.

Talking station records

Q Do you know of any way to safely clean the small record put inside an American Flyer Talking Station from the postwar period? — *Benjy Daniel*

A Gently dusting the disk with a soft brush is the safest way I know of. Some cleaning fluids may soften the record; anything too aggressive will scratch the grooves.

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Smoke pills to fluid

Q I would like to convert some of my Lionel steam locomotives, including a No. 675, to use smoke fluid rather than smoke pills. How can I make this change? Are there commercial kits out there? Does it require disassembly? — *Bob Lamb*

A Most hobby shops and toy train dealers sell a conversion kit that consists of the liquid-style heater element, a plastic chamber cap, a smokestack liner, a gasket, and the other parts needed to make the conversion from smoke pellets to fluid. Of course, you'll need to disassemble the steam locomotive and replace the original parts with the parts in the kit. Soldering is required to do the job properly.



When Lionel introduced its No. 675 steam engine and tender in 1947, it designed the locomotive to use the new SP Smoke Pellets. But converting postwar steamers so they use smoke fluid requires only an inexpensive and common conversion kit.

Storing locomotives on MTH WTIU

Q Using a Samsung Galaxy TAB A7 LITE tablet (version 14) with the MTH WTIU, I was able to add and run some of my 60 O gauge engines and several lash-ups into the engine list. But when using my Android smartphone, I found it does not have these engines on the list. Are these not stored in the WTIU? Do I have to add them again on every device? Any assistance you can give will be appreciated. — *Steve Phetterplace*

A We decided it would be best if we reached out to MTH for some help with this challenging question, and executive Andy Edleman replied: "You do not have to add locomotives into each device even though that data is not stored in the WTIU (this is the way the system has always worked). Because the locomotives identify themselves when the app queries the layout, adding locomotives is a fairly easy process as the app 'finds' them on powered tracks on the layout.

"As to your reader's question, if a user doesn't wish to manually add locomotives into the second phone or tablet, he or she can export the app's contents on the originating device using the Export/Import function under the Advanced Features screen. Once exported, the contents are imported into the second device. This function is available only in the Premium Version of the app.

"The Export/Import function includes accessories, switches, tracks, scenes and routes that may have been set up plus locomotives. It can also be used to pull data from a physical remote. Any lash-ups created on one device have to be set up manually once individual locomotives have been added to the phone or tablet."

We at *Classic Toy Trains* are very grateful for Andy's insights and ideas. Please be aware that there's a fee to upgrade to the Premium Version of the app.

READER COMMENT

Brad Adams noticed an error in the answer given to the question about a Lionel No. 65530 operating/uncoupling track in the Winter 2024 issue. He believed the answer was about a No. 65149 uncoupling track. The 65149 can be hooked up to an SC-2 or a more modern ASC-2. But the 65530 cannot be hooked up to either.

Beacon refuses to rotate

Q The light on my American Flyer No. 769A Aircraft Beacon will no longer rotate. I have two beacon tops: an original and a reproduction, and neither will rotate. I am sending 17 volts to the bulb. Is more voltage needed? Will bending the vanes on the beacon tops fix this? What am I missing? — *Mark Raspotnik*

A Many original and reproduction bulbs simply don't generate enough heat to cause the beacon to rotate properly. That was probably the reason that Lionel eventually upgraded its No. 394 Rotary Beacon and introduced the No. 494.

The best advice available comes from Doug Peck, the longtime proprietor of Port Line Hobby Supplies (www.portlines.com). Here's what he advises:

"Operate your beacon on its own dedicated transformer so the maximum current is reaching the bulb. If you have it wired to a transformer that is running track power and additional accessories, less and less current reaches the beacon bulb, and the bulb does not generate enough heat to drive the beacon top."

You don't need a large transformer — any 40- or 50-watt unit is fine. Connect the beacon to the VARIABLE post and not to the FIXED VOLTAGE post. Then you can easily adjust the voltage to the minimum needed for operation.

In addition, according to Doug, you must have a good-quality 14-volt beacon bulb. Avoid cheap and low-quality reproductions where the dimple is poorly formed and is located off-center. It also may not sit level in the socket.

Finally, you must be certain your aircraft beacon accessory is placed in a perfectly level location and away from all drafts. And the rotating top must sit perfectly level on the bulb. The slightest angle will prevent proper rotation.

Brad explained in his email that if you try to connect a Lionel 65530 or its Fas-Track counterpart (the No. 12054) to an SC-2 or an ASC-2, you won't be able to separate the activation of the control rails from the center magnet on those track products and therefore will risk damaging the center magnet. The center magnet, he told *Classic Toy Trains*, can't be operated for more than 10 seconds without risk of damage. **CTT**

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Lionel's No. 1684 Steam Locomotive

THIS MODEL DEBUTED A ONE-PIECE SHELL CASTING



The Lionel catalog of 1942 reveals how the firm relied on the No. 1684 steam locomotive to fill its sets. The 9½-inch-long model with a 2-4-2 wheel arrangement was assigned to six of the 12 O-27 outfits in the 32-page catalog.

Readers of the catalog might have been surprised to see the 1684 and wondered why Lionel had gone to the trouble of developing a new steamer. After all, the company had not previously used the 1684 to pull a cataloged outfit.

However, as Bruce Greenberg observes in the third volume of his series on Lionel O gauge trains of the prewar era, the 1684 was far from new in 1942. For the past two years, Lionel had used it in many of the firm's promotional sets.

BRAND-NEW CASTING

In the late 1930s, engineers at Lionel were finishing a few small steam locomotives intended to pull short freight and passenger sets at the low end of the line. The Nos. 1664 2-4-2 steamer and 1666 2-6-2 model made their debuts in

1938 and handled a number of less-expensive O-27 outfits.

Lionel wanted something even simpler and less costly, so designers came up with the 1684 for 1940. It was almost an inch shorter than the 1664 or 1666. Further, while the latter steamers were made using two castings (pilot plus steam chest and boiler plus cab) the 1684 consisted of a one-piece casting. Four features were molded using just one new casting.

Greenberg notes that while a one-piece casting lowered manufacturing costs, its development required "a much greater up front design cost." The casting's success depended on how easily the shell could be released from it. "This," Greenberg adds, "called for a multi-part mold with no undercuts to entrap the metal and very close tolerances."

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

The one-piece casting was key for Lionel adding a locomotive it could produce in large quantities while reducing the costs of assembly. Fewer parts were needed to complete the model,

making its production simpler and less expensive. The 1684 really was a remarkable engine.

Lionel completed the 1684 by installing rimless blackened drive wheels and spoked trailing wheels. It came painted gunmetal gray with its number rubber-stamped in white below the cab windows. Other details included a bell, a whistle, rods, handrails, an E-unit lever, and disc pilot wheels.

The boiler and interior of the cab had many details. The front wall of the cab, known as the "backhead," had more cast-in highlights than any other Lionel steamer, notably stoker elevators, washout plugs, feed-water heater gauges, throttle, and firebox handle and doors.

PROMOTIONAL SETS

Something else sets the 1684 apart and explains why people in 1942 may have thought it was new. Lionel completed it in 1940, but the firm's marketing executives decided to use it only in promotional outfits.

They did so for 1941, as many uncataloged sets have been documented. Greenberg

believes the 1684 might have been used in promotional outfits for 1940 as well. He provides a list of those sets in his new book. Most paired the locomotive with a No. 1689 tender either with or without a whistle mechanism. A few came with a No. 2689 tender.

Not until 1942 did Lionel introduce the 1684 to its cataloged roster. The purpose of expanding how it used the low-end steamer was fairly obvious.

With the U.S. in the war, executives at Lionel believed it was only a matter of time before federal authorities prohibited the production of metal toys and other goods. They were rushing to deplete their inventory of die-cast steamers. Placing the 1684 in both cataloged and promotional sets made sense when the future looked so uncertain. **CTT**

Lionel cataloged the No. 1684 steam locomotive in 1942. The 2026 edition of Greenberg's Pocket Price Guide to Lionel Trains values this 2-4-2 steamer at \$45 in good condition and \$70 in excellent.



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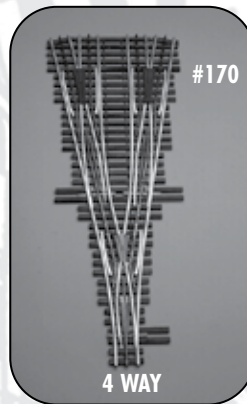
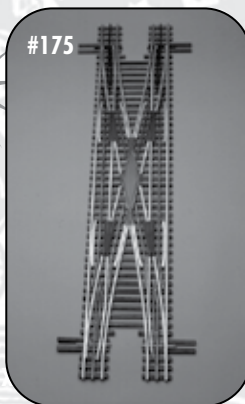
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VARIETY MOTIVATES LIONEL EXPERT MARK STEPHENS

Building a collection known for its diverse treasures

STORY BY ROGER CARP // PHOTOS BY DENNIS BRENNAN

Mark Stephens approaches collecting Lionel trains the way great track athletes approach running. Where they choose to specialize often changes over the years, but they never abandon what has worked for them and provided meaning in the past.

Just as top-ranked runners alternate between long distances and midrange dashes, so has Mark focused over the years on different periods and gauges in the history of Lionel. Leading milers analyze every element of their technique to gain advantages, and Mark has sought to learn everything about how Lionel engineers designed locomotives and rolling stock. He has accumulated blueprints and mock-ups, along with paint samples and other

kinds of preproduction models to gain an understanding of how Lionel manufactured and marketed its remarkable trains.

For years, Mark focused on postwar displays, as shown by the article about him in the December 2008 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*. Yet like great athletes, he refuses to limit himself and his interests. Mark has since shifted his priorities to scarce Lionel items from the postwar era, along with certain prewar treasures.

Hearing about Mark's emphasis on the wide range of Lionel items from 1945 to 1969 made essential a return to his home. Let's take a look at more of the prizes he owns, with a promise to share more in the future. We need to pay attention to how Mark has changed in collecting while deepening his respect for Lionel.



This superb No. D-20 countertop accessory display is from 1950. Mark installed some of his favorites from 1949 and '50, including scarce color variations of the Nos. 394 Rotary Beacon, 395 Floodlight Tower, and 455 Oil Derrick and Pumper.



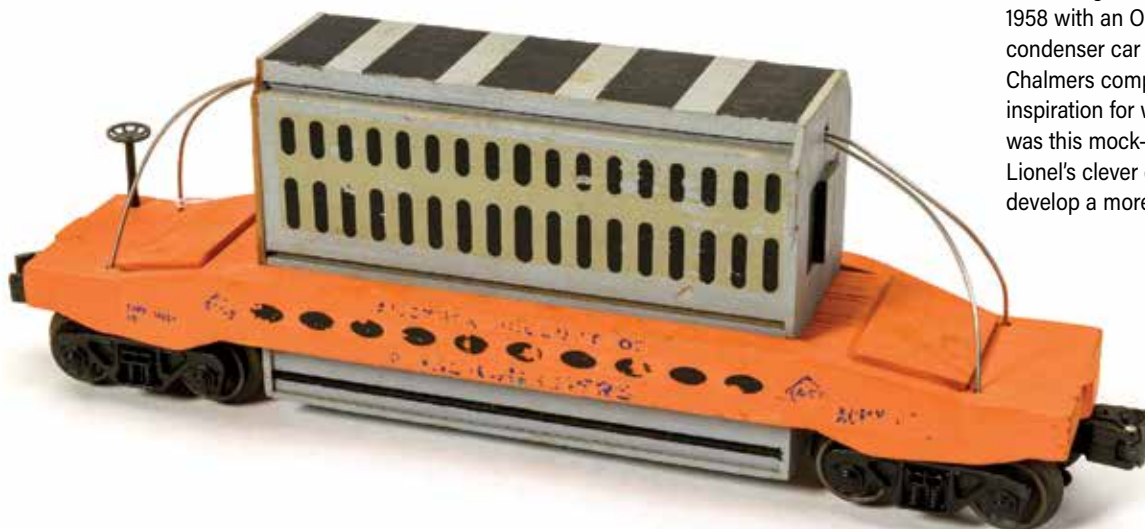
There probably isn't a collector of Lionel trains from the postwar era that doesn't feel a love for the different models of the Pennsylvania RR's classic GG1 electric. Mark wanted to highlight these two highly desirable ones. Left: This No. 2332 has a nickel-plated body and brass trucks plus a tag with the handwritten date of 9/1/47 and the initials "R.M.K." Lionel designer Richard "Dick" Krevet created the model on behalf of his colleagues in the Engineering Department to present to Chief Engineer Joseph Bonanno the year the GG1 made its debut in the cataloged line. The display, which came with metal catenary spanning wood poles, was made by Development Engineer Frank Pettit, another member of the department. Right: This black-painted No. 2360 with a single gold stripe was one of fewer than 10 examples delivered by Lionel to William Vagell, owner of a well-known Lionel dealership in Garfield, N.J., and a close friend of company co-founder Joshua Lionel Cowen.



Another gem in Mark's collection is this display of the No. 2333 Santa Fe F3 A-A units presented by Lionel President Lawrence Cowen to dealer Lee Hieronimus on October 4, 1949. Lee, who owned Lee's Trains in Oakland, Calif., was among the most prominent Lionel retailers west of the Mississippi River. In addition to this display, labeled No. D-8, Mark owns the cardboard box in which it was first packaged, with the hand-printed admonition: "Please handle very carefully." On the bottom of the wood board Cowen wrote, "With sincere regards Larry Cowen Oct 4 1949."



Interesting how Mark's areas of emphasis have changed over time. Once Standard gauge models from the prewar era and sets from the early modern era fascinated him. These days his focus is strictly postwar. There are a few exceptions, notably locomotives and rolling stock from the OO gauge lineup Lionel cataloged between 1938 and '42. Among Mark's favorites are some brand-new cars in their boxes, including the Nos. 0045 Shell tank car and 0046 Southern Pacific hopper. Displayed near them at Mark's home are Lionel 2 7/8" gauge rarities.



Lionel augmented its cataloged line in 1958 with an O gauge model of a novel condenser car manufactured by the Allis-Chalmers company in Milwaukee. The inspiration for what became the No. 6519 was this mock-up fabricated out of wood. Lionel's clever engineers likely used it to develop a more sophisticated version.



Designers at Lionel frequently experimented with different paint schemes before finalizing their decision for how to decorate a model. Different versions for the No. 6464-50 Minneapolis & St. Louis boxcar introduced in 1953 have surfaced over the years, and Mark owns a couple of very attractive ones that never were produced in quantity. The first has a glossy tan plastic shell with white rubber-stamped graphics. The other was painted a flat shade of yellow over a brown shell and rubber-stamped in black.



Mark assumes that every Lionel postwar enthusiast has a real affinity for the No. 3376 Bronx Zoo model — universally known in the toy train hobby as the "giraffe car." Therefore, he's proud to display this painted and decaled engineering mock-up of the animated freight car Lionel added to its line in 1959.



Cool, just cool! This is the way to describe the version of the No. 3454 Operating Merchandise Car painted the correct silver yet heat-stamped with the graphics for a No. 2454 Baby Ruth boxcar with a Pennsylvania RR herald. Almost certainly a mistake made almost 80 years ago at the Lionel factory, but it is oh so sweet!



In the late 1950s and early '60s, executives at Lionel sought to win corporate sponsors for pieces of rolling stock. They asked designers to create simple mock-ups decorated with the name and logo of potential clients. Mark searches for these rare items and was pleased to show two 8¼-inch-long "plug-door" boxcars. One came lettered for Pillsbury Flour; the other has the emblem of West Virginia Pulp & Paper. Too bad neither model enticed a business to underwrite their production.



Anyone exploring the display shelves in Mark's home feels pulled toward paint samples. Check out a couple of the experiments engineers did for decorating the ubiquitous No. 6462 New York Central gondola. One came painted a light shade of green with black rubber-stamped graphics. Another was painted a blend of blue and gray with identical markings. Mark also has a 6462 painted yellow to match the rare No. 6464-50 Minneapolis & St. Louis boxcar that's pictured on the opposite page.



Take your time studying this No. 3349 Turbo Missile Launch Car. Seems pretty ordinary, right? Not if you remember that typical versions lack any lettering. This scarce version has the four-digit product number printed in black. It originally was exhibited at the sales office that Lionel maintained in downtown Chicago.

Lionel cataloged a second model of a General Electric EP5 electric locomotive in 1957, just one year after its No. 2350 New Haven EP5 arrived. To create this mock-up of the No. 2351 Milwaukee Road unit, engineers painted over a 2350 body shell and added assorted graphics using commercial decals, including the neat herald.



Another scarce if not rare locomotive acquired by Mark in recent years is this No. 2037 2-6-4 steam engine paired with a No. 6026W whistle tender. What makes the model stand out? It was painted gray rather than the customary black and then finished with black rubber-stamped lettering. It isn't a gorgeous locomotive yet definitely a cool one.



This boxcar appears to be just a typical No. 6464-400 Baltimore & Ohio Timesaver. It has the familiar blue-and-orange color scheme. Then you examine the graphics and find they belong to a No. 6464-500 Timken boxcar. Lionel reissued both models in 1969, so did production workers make a mistake? That must be the explanation, because why would anyone have intentionally created something so odd? Too bad the full story behind boxcar is unlikely to come to the surface.



I'm not sure if it's Mark or his wife, Phyllis, who has a soft spot in their heart for the No. 68 Executive Inspection Car brought out by Lionel back in 1958. I just know there are several examples on display at their beautiful home, including these three scarce color samples. The light blue version is a never manufactured preproduction model. The olive green version is a never manufactured paint sample. And the red version is a mock-up with clear plastic windows and lacking a motor. Mark is on the lookout for other rare versions of the Executive Inspection Car.



The models that stand out in Mark's incredible collection are not only the impossible-to-find prototypes or paint samples but also scarce variations of well-publicized models. Take this No. 41 U.S. Army switcher, which Lionel introduced in 1955. Every postwar collector owns one of them, but you have to be an experienced and knowledgeable enthusiast like Mark to be able to have on display the highly desirable painted version of the black engine.



One piece in Mark's collection that has long puzzled him is this mounted display of a No. 3454 Operating Merchandise Car. The model is a regular production item. Who made the presentation piece and who was the recipient? Was it given to someone at Lionel in gratitude for their hard work? Was for an executive at the Pennsylvania RR. If that was the case, then why didn't the display feature the larger and more impressive No. 3854 Automatic Merchandise Car Lionel also introduced in 1946?



Lionel experts with a special interest in postwar cabooses will always find plenty to study at Mark's. Some of his visitors concentrate on his paint samples of the N5c porthole caboose and unusual versions of the No. 6556 Smoking Caboose. We'll get to those in a future article. For now, let's go with two desirable Southern Pacific-type models. Left: The No. 6357 Lionel painted maroon with a matching smokestack and a circle-L herald. Right: The No. 6059 Minneapolis & St. Louis painted glossy bright red over a light gray shell is impossible to find.



Lionel added a blue stripe and white graphics to a low-end 2-4-2 to create a rare version of its No. 246 steam engine and tender with Baltimore & Ohio markings used in the No. X-849 promotional outfit in 1959. Mark has been told this striking combination was made for a hobby shop in Pennsylvania and only five other examples have been reported to date. **CTT**



INSTALL FIGURES in Lionel 21-inch passenger cars

BY LUCAS IVERSON // PHOTOS BY CODY GRIVNO

Lionel Trains' 21" passenger cars have been a staple in the manufacturer's lineup of O-scale, 3-rail products for some time. A common criticism, though, has been the lack of installed passengers upon purchase, leaving empty seats that need to be filled. I'm here to remedy that problem. From disassembly to reassembly, this project is easier to accomplish than I initially thought. You, too, can add figures to your own 21" cars from Lionel!

I'm using one of the coaches from the Norfolk Southern Excursion Coach 4-Pack (No. 1927200) and a dome car from the NS Excursion Private Car 2-Pack B (No. 1927220). These cars were offered in Lionel's 2019, Volume 1 catalog. The basic setup in the body and frame's assembly has not changed since they were introduced.

Depending on the brand of seated figures, some might not need modifications to fit while others will.



DISASSEMBLY

You'll find two 3 x ½" Phillips round-head body screws at each end of every coach, diner, and dome car near the centerline, for a total of four screws under each car. (Round-ended observation cars have only three screws, with one being a longer tie bolt at the tail end.)

It's easy to access the screw heads on these cars since there's little underbody detail in the area. Just flip the car over on a cradle and use a Phillips head screwdriver. A smaller flathead can also be used for a better grip without stripping the heads.

You will also see four smaller Phillips flat-head screws at each end. These are for the Kinematic coupler system and don't need to be unscrewed unless you plan to replace the couplers.

Likely, you'll notice some leftover adhesive between the carbody and the frame. You'll need to lightly pry the body's underside – while taking care not to damage the underbody detail – and gently lift each end of the frame by way of the truck assembly. This process may involve multiple attempts until you can feel the frame lifting off from the body. Take your time.

Once you feel the adhesive loosen, slowly lift the frame from the body. Be aware of the electrical wire found at one end of the car – normally in the vestibule area – spanning from the floor to the ceiling. This is the connection for the LED lighting system from the truck's pickup

rollers. While there is some slack in the wire to simply set the body off to the side and next to the frame, I recommend unplugging it for a full separation. You can then move the body completely out of the way as the frame is now the primary focus, while preventing any damage to the wire. The wire can be unplugged with either a pair of pliers or by hand.

INSTALLING FIGURES

Placing the frame right-side up again, you'll see the molded seats are ready to be filled with passengers. Multiple manufacturers offer seated figures, including (See the Spring 2025 issue for a buyer's guide to figures – *Editor*):

- **Atlas O Premier Madison Heavyweight Passenger Figure Sets (No. 3009950)**
- **Bachmann Waist-Up Seated Platform Passengers (No. 33165)**
- **Evemodel O Scale 1:43 All Seated Painted Figures (No. 4302)**
- **Golden Gate Depot Little People 1930-1950s (No. 1930)**
- **Lionel 21" Passenger Scale Figures Pack (No. 83653)**
- **Preiser O-Scale Seated Passengers Sets (No. 45077, 65500)**
- **RMT BeePeople 48 Seated Figures (No. 99417)**
- **Woodland Scenics Passengers (No. A2731)**

While certain figures will fit like a



glove, others may require some minor modifications. This will usually involve cutting the feet and sections of the legs. I've used a hobby knife and a sanding file to smooth out the cuts. Regardless of which figures you purchase and where you place them in a car, keep in mind their size and the possible modifications mentioned when test-fitting prior to gluing.

REASSEMBLY

Once you have your passengers seated and secured in place from the dried super glue, it's time to reassemble the car. First, replug the wire for the LED lights. When beginning to put the body and frame back together, I offer these quick tips:

Have the body and frame right-side up to lower the former onto the latter. Be mindful of the LED wire during the lowering process to prevent possible pinching. Take your time.

Once you feel the body lined up and snapped back into place on the frame, flip the car over so it rests in the cradle. The four body screws can then be reinstalled, thus completing the reassembling and overall project.

DOMES

Half- and full-length dome cars are also part of Lionel's 21" car lineup. While adding passengers in the lower sections involves the disassembly mentioned above, adding them to the dome section is a different, yet easy project.

With small tabs molded at each end, simply lift at one end until the dome pops right off the roof of the carbody. The seats are then clearly accessible to add your figures. The dome can then be popped right into place.

Enjoy your train now filled with passengers that breathe new life into what were empty rows of seats. **CTT**



Multiple manufacturers offer O-scale seated figures, including Lionel, Atlas, Golden Gate Depot, and Evemodel.



Two Phillips round-head body screws can be found on the under-frame at each end of the car.



Lifting the frame from the body reveals the plugged wire for the LED lighting system.



With small tabs molded at each end, simply lift at one end until the dome pops right off the roof of the carbody.

3-RAIL PARADISE IN THE MOUNTAINS

Escape with Jim Steed
to his new layout

STORY BY ROGER CARP // PHOTOS BY JIM STEED

Remember how The Drifters once sang of the relief they found from the daily rat race by climbing a stairway to the fresh air and twinkling stars on the roof? They invited everyone to join them in their newly found “paradise that’s trouble proof.”

Lifelong O gauge enthusiast Jim Steed not only recalls the tune hitting the pop charts in 1964 but he can also say he has lived it. But where his late wife, Gayle, and he would escape was not the deck of an apartment building in a city. They treasured the time spent in a cabin Gary Denski built for them in the hills of northern Georgia a few miles from their home. Gayle, who loved camping as much as her husband, cherished the sweet smells and stunning vistas.

What this thoughtful and warm lady loved as well was watching Jim create outstanding three-rail layouts on which to run the Lionel trains he had been enjoying since boyhood. So as Jim and Gayle furnished their cabin, transforming it into a refuge from daily life, she nudged him to bring over a few locomotives and some track. “Time for you to build a layout here.”

Once Gayle had lit a fire, Jim, who is as courtly and kind a gentleman as can be imagined, was more than happy to add fuel. Gary had added on a half-basement





1 The postwar era of Lionel greatness returns on Jim Steed's 8 x 21-foot Blairsville & Georgia Southern RR. Leading the way, as expected, are Santa Fe F3 cab units. Overhead is another favorite of his, a No. 6250 Seaboard NW2 diesel switcher.



Jim and Gayle Steed loved their mountain cabin and made sure to build a terrific O gauge layout in it.



2 Jim's O gauge layout fills much of the half-basement in a creekside cabin. He used seven 4 x 8-foot sheets of plywood to form the tabletop and then painted it.



3 There's so much to like about Jim's recently completed layout, but maybe what pleases every visitor is the nonstop action. He can run four trains and two trolleys at once and hardly ever misses a chance to do so. Lionel Nos. 2032 Erie FAs are among the stars here.

so Jim could design a layout with the same personality and sense of tradition as his Great Georgia Central & Southern RR (featured in the July 2011 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*). Input from Gayle shaped the development of the Blairsville & Georgia Southern RR, proudly presented here.

WORKING TOGETHER

When Jim is working on a layout, he never feels he's laboring in solitude. Memories of Gayle sustain him, as do those of his dad. The close relationship the two men maintained traced its roots back to Jim's childhood, when he and his father shared a love of trains. It began when Jim was four and received for Christmas of 1946 his first Lionel set, led by a No. 224 steamer.

The boy knew this toy was magical and special. It intrigued his father, even though Frank Steed was carving out a career for himself in the trucking industry. He had won state and national "rodeos" for truckers, shiny trophies proving his prowess.

But Frank knew his son was too young to be given the keys to a truck, so a Lionel train would have to suffice. Not that the

AT A GLANCE

Jim Steed's Blairsville & Georgia Southern RR

Gauge: 0

Dimensions: 8 x 21 feet

Track: K-Line, Lionel, Menards (diameters range from 31 to 54 inches)

Switches: Lionel

Motive power: Lionel (postwar, modern), MTH, Williams

Rolling stock: Lionel (postwar, modern), MTH

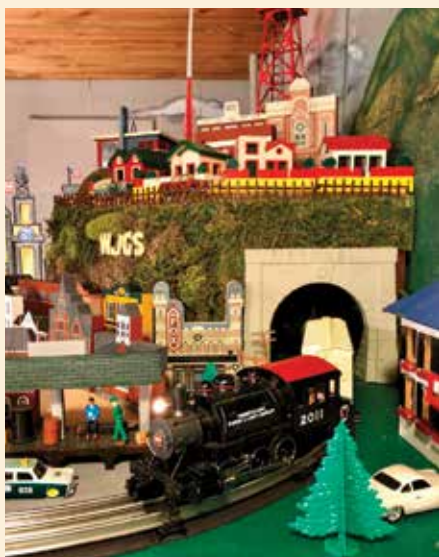
Controls: Lionel type-Z, MTH No. Z-4000 (3 transformers)

Accessories: Hafner, Lionel (postwar, modern), Marx, MTH, Miller Engineering

Structures: Marx, Menards, Lionel, Plasticville, scratchbuilt

Vehicles: Ertl, Tootsietoy

Figures: Plasticville, Pola

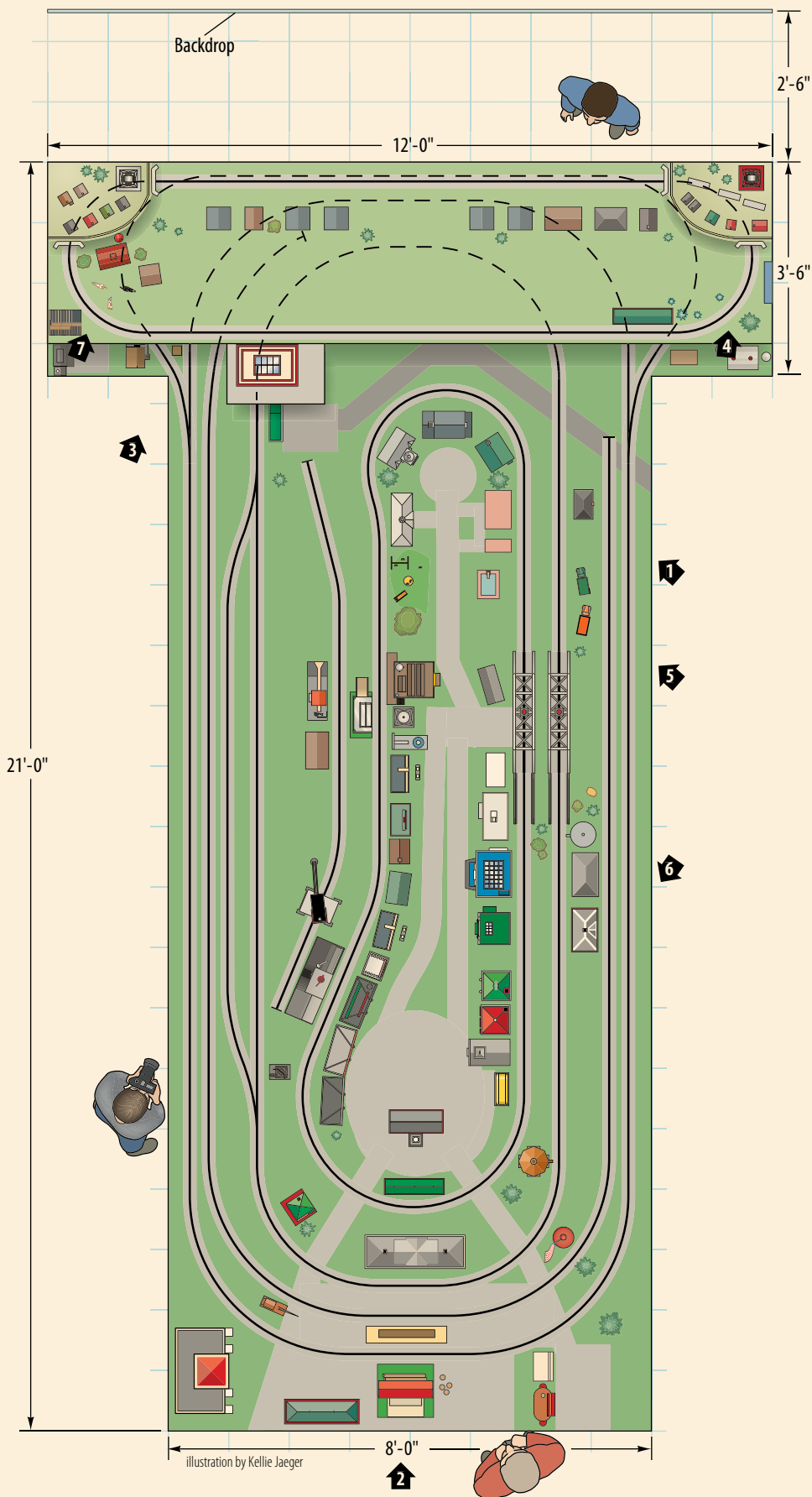


4 The perky Lionel No. 38684 Pennsylvania Power & Light Co. Dockside steam engine only proves that Jim has good taste when it comes to supplementing his postwar roster with a few modern pieces. The 0-4-0 leads a short freight out of the tunnel.

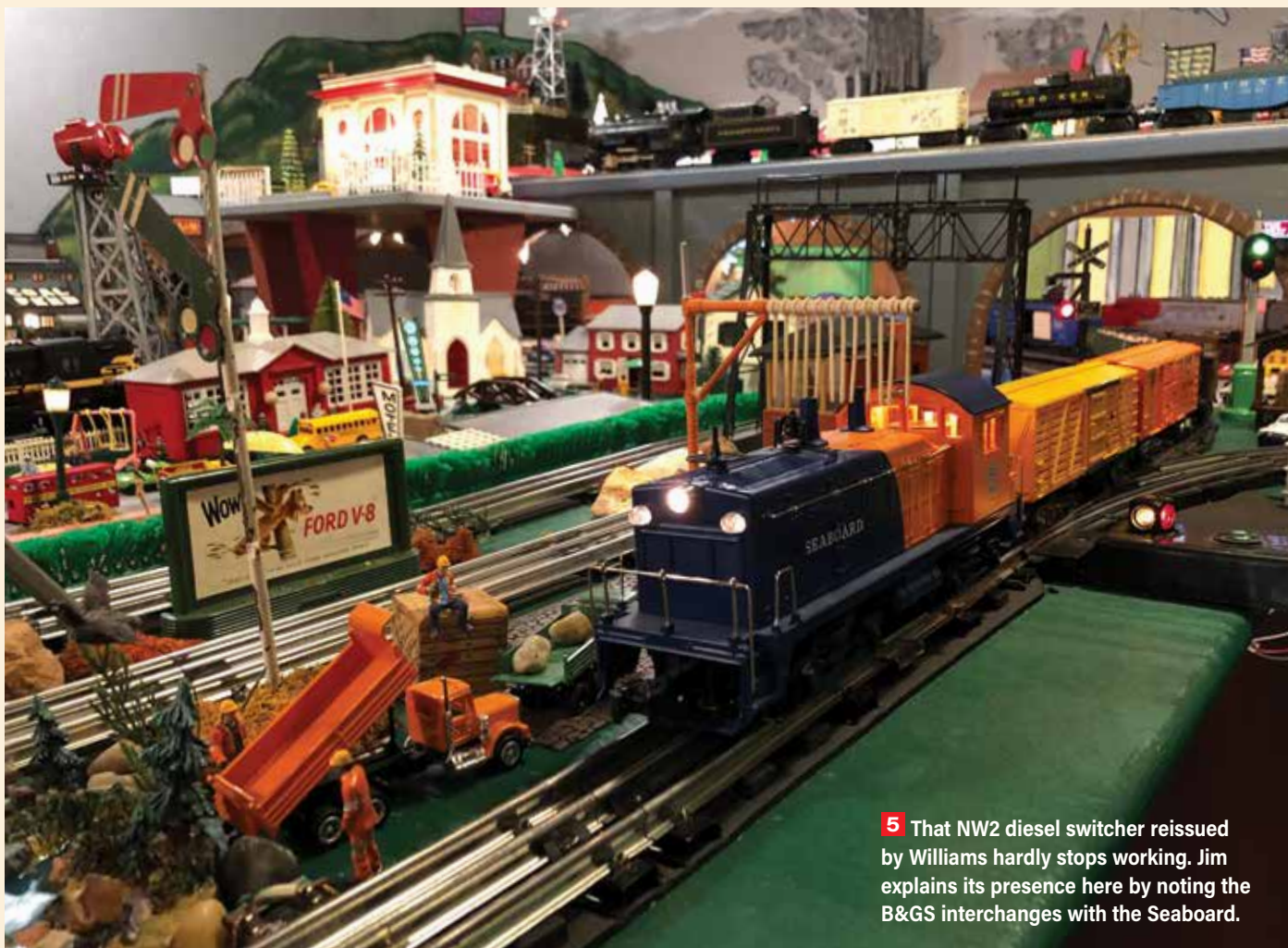
engine and its cars were just going to sit on a shelf or dash around a simple oval.

Before anyone might have guessed, including Jim's wonderful mother, the elder Steed was encouraging his son to build a layout. And offering to help him!

As Jim progressed through elementary



Long main lines enable Jim to operate long trains behind postwar and modern locomotives on his 8 x 21-foot Blairsville & Georgia Southern RR. The numbered arrows correspond to the numbers in each of the captioned photographs he took for this exclusive article.



5 That NW2 diesel switcher reissued by Williams hardly stops working. Jim explains its presence here by noting the B&GS interchanges with the Seaboard.



6 The solitary traveler waiting for her train at the Marx Girard station watches the No. 2032 Erie FA diesels accelerate. Is the engineer racing the green sportscar?

school, Lionel trains remained a vital part of his life. He vividly remembered the thrill of accompanying his father to a large hardware store in downtown Atlanta in 1950 and watching as his dad emptied his wallet of \$50 to pay for a No. 773 4-6-4 Hudson and tender. Jim still runs that classic model.

The bonds between father and son grew tighter as they turned from Jim's first layout to a second and larger one that he planned after turning 12. Again, they handled every task, from track to wiring, as a team. Jim enjoyed every second of pleasure that layout brought him until the day he left home to attend Georgia Tech.

PAST KNOWLEDGE

Decades after earning his college degree and serving with distinction in the Marine Corps, Jim felt eager to build another layout. His masterpiece will always be the Great Georgia Central & Southern. Still, Jim's most meaningful project may be the 6 x 8-foot layout he constructed for his dad. "That layout gave the Hudson a nice home until my father died in 2000 at the age of 92," Jim says.

From then on, Jim contented himself with fine-tuning the GGC&S. Maybe he picked up a structure to enhance a scene. Or Gayle might spy at a show a figure or landscape effect she considered just right.

Jim might have kept puttering with his three-rail layout, but he finally had to admit that it was done. The best way to revive his juices would be to start something new. And Gayle knew their cabin on a hill would be perfect for doing just that.

You can envision the rest. Not long after the Steeds' vacation home was ready to be occupied, Jim was downstairs exploring the 10 x 30-foot area and mulling over

what he could do. Everything he had accomplished on his own and with his father infused him with confidence about this project. He quickly reached decisions about the size and ultimate appearance of the new layout. Then he got to work!

FAMILIAR TECHNIQUES

The Blairsville & Georgia Southern RR was going to have a look and feel similar to that of its big brother. And why not? Jim and Gayle loved gazing over the GGC&S and running trains over its multiple main lines. They appreciated the sense that it was a postwar railroad. Jim intended to try for the same, albeit on a smaller scale.

Asked about the track, Jim replied with a hint of amazement there could even be a question. "Lionel tubular track from the postwar era!" Most of the straights and curves were traditional O gauge pieces.

Jim did opt for wider 42- and 56-diameter sections where he thought it necessary. Those curves came from K-Line and Menards. Lionel was the source for the four remote-control switches.

Next, Jim had fun selecting many of the postwar accessories from his collection and deciding where they would look best on the painted tabletop. Among the jewels he picked out were Lionel Nos. 115 City Station, 445 Automatic Switch Tower, and 494 Rotary Beacon, along with signals.

Conventional control rules in the Steed household. It always has and always will. Jim prefers its simplicity and reliability.

"Okay, Jim. How many vintage Z and ZW transformers do you use?"

"I wired just a single old type-Z, and it's for the accessories. The Blairsville & Georgia Southern runs on the power provided by three of the No. Z-4000 transformers from MTH Electric Trains." Jim answered.

Just when you think you have this veteran O gauger figured out, he surprises you. But it all makes sense, because the Z-4000 can handle every task.

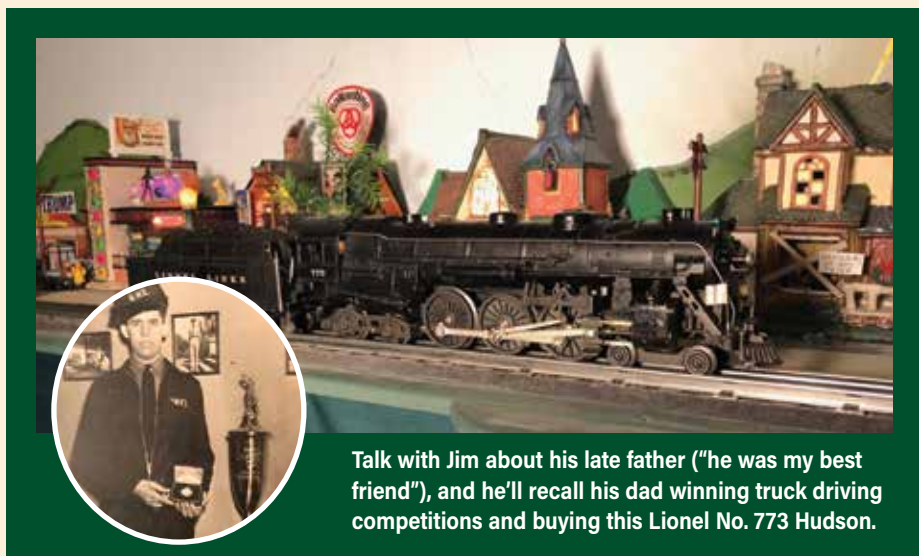
STRUCTURES AND MORE

When something succeeds and has done so for more than half a century, why drop it? Jim abides by that attitude in his daily life and applied it to the layout. Here, we're talking about the structures filling scenes.

That "something" referred to in the previous paragraph would be the wide assortment of structures marketed by Bachmann Bros. for its famous Plasticville line. Jim and Gayle found dozens of those popular items at train shows and swap meets. He therefore had a great many of



7 Jim can't recall playing with one of Lionel's entertaining motorized units when he was a youngster. He makes up for being deprived by running this No. 60 Lionelville Trolley.



Talk with Jim about his late father ("he was my best friend"), and he'll recall his dad winning truck driving competitions and buying this Lionel No. 773 Hudson.

them to use on this layout, and he did!

In addition to the houses, municipal and civic buildings, and farm items from Plasticville, Jim liked a few Marx structures from postwar days as well as some made by contemporary manufacturers, notably Menards. The vehicles put on the painted roads and the streets fashioned out of vinyl blinds were by Tootsietoy..

Landscaping has never been a priority for Jim, so this layout reflects his traditional approach. The two mountains he made using cardboard boxes painted to his liking. Foliage and lichen went on them, as they did any other spots he thought would benefit. Trees are vintage Plasticville and new Scenic Express.

PAST AND PRESENT

Walk along the B&GS and you feel time has melted away. The Hudson runs as well now as it did when Frank Steed bought it. Also sure-footed after so long are the New York Central F3 diesels and Virginian Train Master Jim once received as gifts.

The sense of the past is strong in Jim's train room, especially when he talks about his father or remembers camping with Gayle. But then Jim switches to the present, sharing plans to improve scenes or upgrade his roster. Lionel trains have sustained him through the best as well as the most challenging times of his life. They continue to give his life meaning and offer a proper escape. **CTT**

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Aug 16-17 Chantilly, VA - Dulles Expo Center
Sep 7 Wheaton, IL - DuPage County Fairgrounds
Oct 4-5 Del Mar, CA - Del Mar Fairgrounds
Oct 5 Wheaton, IL - DuPage County Fairgrounds
Oct 25-26 Shakopee, MN - Canterbury Park
Nov 1-2 Monroeville, PA - Convention Center
Nov 2 Wheaton, IL - DuPage County Fairgrounds
Nov 22-23 Wilmington, MA - Shriner's Auditorium
Nov 29-30 Edison, NJ - New Jersey Expo Center
Nov 29-30 Collinsville, IL - Gateway Center
Dec 6-7 Timonium, MD - Maryland State Fair
Dec 7 Wheaton, IL - DuPage County Fairgrounds
Dec 13-14 Pleasanton, CA - Alameda Fairgrounds
Dec 20-21 Chantilly, VA - Dulles Expo Center

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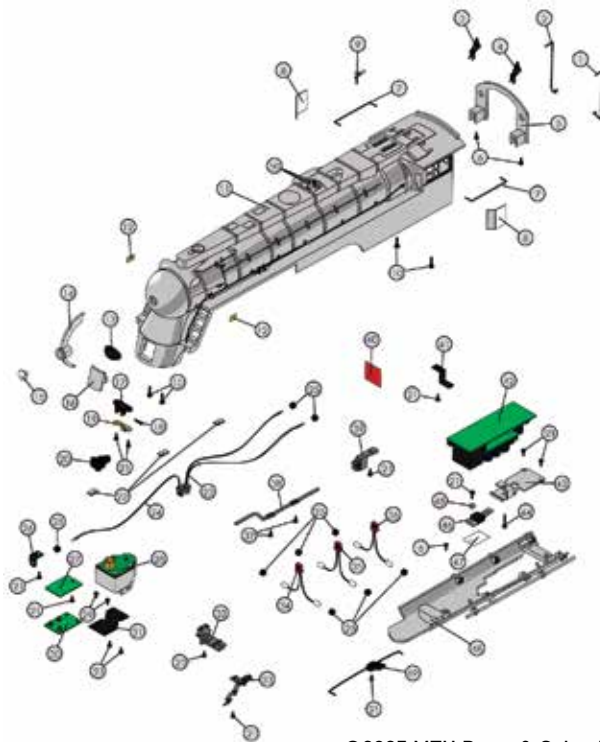
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TOY TRAIN PARTS BUYER'S GUIDE

Parts for a
variety of
manufacturers
and eras

STORY BY RENE SCHWEITZER



At one time or another, you'll likely need parts for making a repair. Find where to purchase them in this article.

Parts courtesy of Trainz; Cody Grivno photo

One of the questions we receive quite regularly at *Classic Toy Trains* is where to find parts. Sooner or later, it's likely you'll need a part for your locomotive or rolling stock. It could be as simple as needing new traction tires or as complicated as a postwar rehab project. In either case, we have you covered! For each retailer, we've included contact information, era(s), and available brand(s).

A special thanks to Scott Griggs of Trainz for his assistance with compiling this list and providing the parts for the photograph.

Atlas Model Railroad Co., Inc.

378 Florence Ave., Hillside, NJ 07205
908-687-0880
cs@atlasrr.com

Brand: Atlas

Eras: Modern, digital

Notes: Diagrams available for some products

East Coast Train Parts

PO Box 604, Englishtown, NJ 07726
732-845-5966
eastcoasttrainparts.com

Brand: Lionel

Era: Postwar

Notes: Licensed manufacturer of reproduction Lionel boxes. Download of parts list available. Offers wholesale parts.

Hennings Trains

128 South Line St., Lansdale, PA 1944
215-362-2442
ebay.com/str/Hennings-Trains or hennings-trains.
shoplightspeed.com

Brands: American Flyer, Ives, Lionel, MTH, Marx, Williams

Eras: Prewar, postwar, modern, digital

Notes: Extensive parts store on eBay.

JLM Trains

joe@jlmtrains.com
jlmtrains.com

Brands: American Flyer, Carlisle & Finch, Elektro, Ives, Junior Bridge, Lionel, Marx, Noma

Eras: Prewar, postwar

Notes: JLM manufactures parts and sells rubber stamps to restore Lionel and Ives items.

Legacy Station

4153 Lawrenceville Hwy. Ste 12, Lilburn, GA 30047
770-339-7780
legacystation.com

Brands: American Flyer, Lionel

Eras: Postwar, modern, digital

Notes: Find available parts under Lionel trains section on website

Lionel Trains

6301 Performance Dr., Concord, NC 28027
586-949-4100 or 800-454-6635

ERAS DEFINED

Prewar: Before 1945

Postwar: 1945-1969

Modern: 1970-1995

Digital: 1996-present

lionelsupport.com

Brand: Lionel

Eras: Modern, digital

Notes: Search by part number or SKU

MTH Part & Sales

7393 Washington Blvd., Ste. 101, Elkridge, MD 21075

mthpartsandsales.com

info@mthpartsandsales.com

Brand: MTH

Eras: Modern, digital

Notes: Includes parts, parts diagrams, manuals, sound files, and more

Model Train Stuff

7 Glenn Bridge Rd., Ste. B, Arden, NC 28704

modeltrainstuff.com

Brands: Lionel, RMT, Williams by Bachmann

Eras: Modern, digital

Notes: Parts section located under "Trains" tab

Parts4Marx (The Robert Grossman Co.)

540-724-6279

parts4marx@gmail.com

parts4marx.com/shop

Brand: Marx

Eras: Prewar, postwar, modern

Notes: Contact them if you need a part not listed.

Port Lines Hobby Supplies

6 Storeybrooke Dr., Newburyport, MA 01950

888-708-0782

portlines.com

Brands: American Flyer, American Models, Flyer-

ville, Lionel, Mini-Craft, Noma, S-Helper Service

Eras: Postwar, modern, digital

Notes: Specializing in Flyer/S related parts

RFGCO

1 Shore Ave., Unit 562, Oyster Bay, NY 11771

rfgco.com

Brands: American Flyer, Gilbert, Marx

Eras: Prewar, postwar

Notes: Parts as well as instruction sheets and service manuals

Rudy's Toys

207-363-1500

rudystoys.com

Brand: Lionel

Eras: Prewar, postwar, modern, digital

Notes: Service manuals, bulbs, transformer parts, and more

S&W Parts Supply

762 Whitney Dr., Niskayuna, NY 12309-3018

518-280-5197

trains@sandwparts.com

sandwparts.com

Brand: Lionel

Eras: Prewar, postwar

Notes: Inventory varies

Sommerfeld's Trains & Hobbies

12620 W. Hampton Ave, Butler, WI 53007

262-783-7797

sommerfelds.com

Brands: American Flyer, Ives, Lionel, MTH, Marx, Williams

Eras: Prewar, postwar, modern, digital

Notes: Inventory varies.

The Train Tender

7607 Gregg Rd., Bloomfield, NY 14469

585-229-2050

ttender.com

Brands: American Flyer, Lionel, Marx

Eras: Prewar, postwar, modern

Notes: Plasticville parts, plus wire and reference books. Download of parts list available. Owner Jeff Kane purchased the Stan Orr line of parts.

Town and Country Hobbies

973-942-5176

info@towncountryhobbies.

com

stores.towncountryhobbies.

com

Brands: American Flyer, Lionel

Eras: Postwar, modern

Notes: Specializes in Lionel replacement bulbs. Lamp guide for Lionel postwar and MPC eras posted on website. Closing line of Lionel parts.

Toy Train Factory Outlet

570-651-3858

toytrainfactory@hotmail.com

toytrainfactoryoutlet.com

Brand: Lionel

Eras: Prewar, postwar

Notes: Inventory listed on website.

Train Doctor

1 Meridian Rd., Eatontown, NJ

07724

732-660-7062 or 732-493-

3400

repairs@thetraindoctor.com

thetraindoctor.com

Brands: Atlas, Lionel, MTH

Eras: Prewar, postwar, modern, digital

Notes: Bulb index, Lionel traction tire chart, and reset codes available on website

Train Repair Parts

trainrepairparts.com

860-324-7462

Brands: American Flyer, Lionel

Eras: Prewar, postwar, modern

Notes: Includes bulbs and Flyer diagrams.

Trains and More LLC

860-432-2124

trainsmore@aol.com

trainsmore.com

Brand: American Flyer

Eras: Prewar, postwar

Notes: Includes bulbs, boxes, and more.

Trains on Tracks LLC

76 Rt. 101 A., Unit 4, Amherst, NH 03031

603-554-1543

trainsontracks.com

Brand: Lionel

Eras: Modern, digital

Notes: Inventory varies.

TrainWorx

PO Box 13, Chester

Heights, PA 19017

610-872-4699

trainwx610@aol.com

trainwx.com

Brand: Lionel

Eras: Postwar, modern


Notes: Call or email if a part isn't listed.

Trainz.com

866-285-5840

Brands: American Flyer, American, Models, Atlas, K-line, Lionel, MTH, Weaver, Williams

Eras: Prewar, postwar, modern, digital

Notes: Items vary based on available stock. Use filters and search on website. Trainz has digitized all the Lionel postwar, MPC, and early LTI service manual exploded view parts diagrams. 

PARTS COMPANIES OWNED BY TRAINZ

In the past few years, Trainz has purchased a growing number of parts suppliers. Visit Trainz.com and click on "train parts" to see its inventory of more than 30,000 parts.

Athearn HO Parts

(after Athearn sold to Horizon)

Bob Ford

Brasseur's Train Parts

David Corbin

Daves-Twacks-Twains

(American Flyer Parts)

Dew Associates (Drew Waldron)

Dick Lafaschia

Ed's Train Parts (Ed Vanderlinden)

Electric Norman

Empire Hobbies

Gandy Dancers

George Tebolt

H&R Trains

L&N Trains

Lionel, excess parts

McCoy Manufacturing

Miniature Lamp Works (Jill Sisco)

Models Hobby

North Lima Train Works

Nyerges Screw & Bolt

(from Len Carparelli)

Restoration Train Parts

(Chris Rosssbach)

Ron Stanczyk (American Flyer Parts)



Eagerly awaiting the arrival of his first child, O gauge modeler Donald Haney worked with his father to design and build an overhead layout to entertain his baby son. The project looks great and operates so well that Don wanted to share it with anyone who wants a novel layout.

Building an overhead layout

Perfect for a baby's room ... or anywhere else

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONALD HANEY



Don Haney truly believes that toy trains can tighten the bonds between the generations as well now in the 21st century as Lionel and American Flyer claimed they did during the postwar era.

The folks at *Classic Toy Trains* really liked my ideas for building an overhead layout. When I confessed that I needed more than a weekend to complete it, they decided it was worthwhile and had so many practical uses that they would shift their usual emphasis.

So, you should look at constructing an overhead layout as a “Week-Long Workshop” rather than a “Weekend Workshop.” But by omitting my mistakes, you can finish this in a few days and have something special.

NEW ADDITION

What motivated me to map out how to build an overhead O gauge layout was the arrival of my son in August of 2024. Even before then, my wife and I were envisioning his room. I suggested an operating model railroad to include the group of plush characters from *Sesame Street* we had purchased. I wanted to put them in an O gauge gondola pulled by a locomotive. My wife loved the concept, and I began planning.

My son's bedroom is roughly 9 x 15½ feet, so basically it is a big rectangle. My idea was to build a shelf layout around the

perimeter of the room. While this seemed simple, the biggest obstacle I was facing was the closet, which stuck out about 2 feet from the wall. And there's a gap that causes the door of the bedroom to swing open.

I originally thought I could attach the wood shelves to the closet and then have a bridge between the door and the wall. To my surprise, I discovered the closet had no wall studs in it. Therefore, I had to go into the closet like a tunnel and then attach the shelves to the wall inside the closet. Suddenly, my project seemed more complicated than I had initially thought.

CORNERS AND CLOSET

My father, who inspired my passion for toy trains, is an electrical engineer. He used a CAD program to design exact measurements of the room and determine board placement and the dimensions (**Fig. 1**). Using that information, I went to a hardware store and bought 6-foot planks that were 8 inches wide plus a 4 x 8-foot sheet of ½-inch-thick plywood. I used the six planks for the straight sections and the plywood for the curves.

I next painted the wood white, which matched the décor of the baby's room that was a grayish blue with white accents on the window frames and closet doors (**Fig. 2**). After the coats of paint had dried, I measured the sections of wood, beginning with what I was going to need for the corners of the room. Using a reciprocating saw, I cut out four pieces from the plywood to support the curved sections of three-rail track (**Fig. 3**).

Once I had cut out the pieces, I painted their edges to match everything else. Then I investigated how to turn my closet into a tunnel. Using a jab saw with a drywall blade, I made my first cuts into the holes of my drywall on the closet. Once I had a decent-sized hole, I switched to using an extra-fine blade on a hacksaw to make the cutouts for the tunnel's entrance and exit (**Fig. 4**). After plenty of effort, I had the two entrance and exit points for my layout. Then it was time for my father and me to start hanging things.

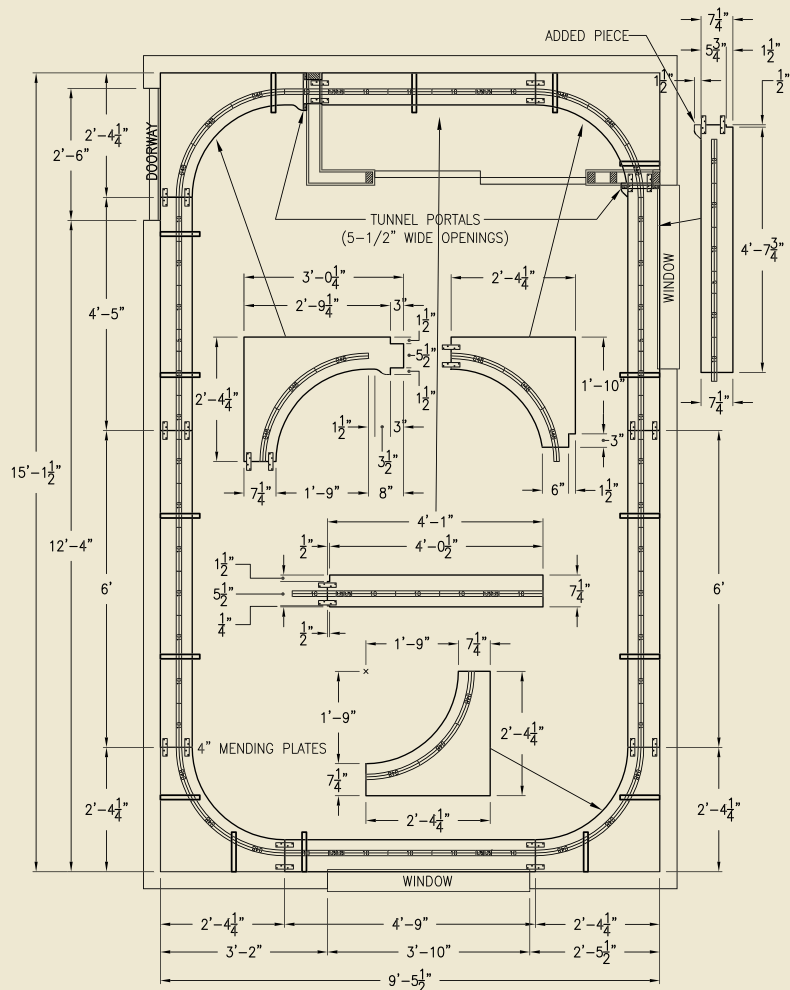


Fig. 1. Don's father used his knowledge in engineering to create this CAD (computer-aided design) drawing of the overhead layout to be built in the 9 x 15½-foot baby's room.



Fig. 2. After purchasing six 6-foot-long planks plus a single 4 x 8-foot sheet of ½-inch-thick plywood from a hardware store, Don took them home and gave each of them several coats of white paint.



Fig. 3. Moving forward, Don cut out four identical pieces from the white-painted sheet of plywood to use to support the curved sections of three-rail track. You can see that this one is ready to install.



Fig. 4. Don had to treat the adjacent closet as a tunnel; so, he had to cut entrance and exit "portals" into the drywall. After he had made a large hole, he used a hacksaw with an extra-fine blade to finish the task.

STUDS AND SHELVES

Locating the studs in the room turned out to be challenging because my two stud finders came up with crazy readings. Typically, studs are placed about every 16 inches. Not in the house my wife and I had purchased! Also, some of the walls had a thin sheet of plywood behind them. Dad and I were going to have to improvise.

Once we found one stud, we used basic math and a few test holes to estimate where the next one would be using the 16-inch method. While this was not the most efficient way, it worked and I was able to find the studs in the room.

Next, I found some shelf brackets at the hardware store that seemed perfect. They had an 8-inch shelf, the perfect length for my boards. They also had a white plastic cover that hid the screw holes and matched the white design I was going for.

I put the first piece at the corner over the entrance of the door. I got my bracket, placed it over the stud, and began to drill it into the wall. I quickly learned that my 2-inch-long No. 10 zinc screws were too long, so I switched to screws 1½ inches long. I discovered the heads of the zinc screws snapped off, so I opted for stainless-steel screws intended for sheet-metal applications. They fit in well, and nothing broke off (**Fig. 5**).

I made sure the brackets held the shelves evenly so the track

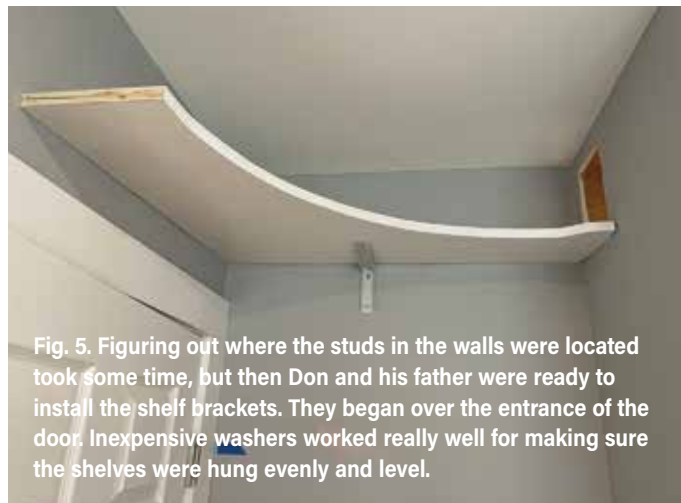


Fig. 5. Figuring out where the studs in the walls were located took some time, but then Don and his father were ready to install the shelf brackets. They began over the entrance of the door. Inexpensive washers worked really well for making sure the shelves were hung evenly and level.

would be level all the way around the room. I relied on washers purchased at the hardware store to even out the shelves. It took more time than expected, but as my father assured me that doing everything right the first time would be the key to success. Another gem of wisdom from Dad.

CORNERS FIRST

With the necessary brackets installed for my corner piece, I was ready to put the first corner into place. I had left a notch at the end of the piece so I could insert it into the entrance of the tunnel and the other end would fit in the 90-degree corner of the wall. However, I soon figured out that none of the corners of the walls of our house are exactly 90 degrees. They're close, but a perfect corner was not fitting in flush against the wall. Thus began the game of sanding and trimming the corner down to fit it flush.

Once my father and I got the corner just right, we put it in place, screwed it into the bracket, and so had one piece installed and ready to go. It took about 6 hours to cut the holes in the wall for the tunnel, locate the studs in the wall, install the brackets, and place one corner piece onto the wall. Longer than I imagined but now I had learned it.

Day two of installation started with attaching the second corner piece on the other side of the wall. After making a few adjustments, I got it on the wall. I used a string to go from one corner

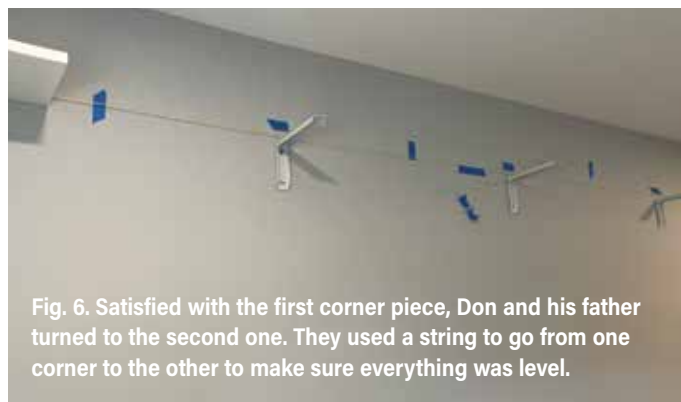


Fig. 6. Satisfied with the first corner piece, Don and his father turned to the second one. They used a string to go from one corner to the other to make sure everything was level.

to the other to make sure everything was level (**Fig. 6**). I left about 8 inches from the ceiling to the shelves for two reasons: It was the lowest I could go around the window frames, and it guaranteed I would be able to run about any type of toy train.

ALONG THE WALL

My farther and I attached the long boards along the wall going from one end to the other. As we went along, we discovered the wall wasn't flat, so we had to sand down the edges of some boards to ensure snug and secure fits. Next, we had to see how to secure the pieces along the wall where the windows were. We had a piece that would go just over the window, but the brackets we could get on that wall were holding up the corner pieces. Then we saw the windows were framed out in the drywall, so also was the wood we could attach on top of the window (**Fig. 7**).

Using the tiny three-hole L-braces, we secured the boards above the window to the boards in the wall and made our way around the room. The final thing I did gave the boards extra support. Using four-hole splice plates, I attached each board piece together to make sure everything was level and secure. I needed about three full days of work to get the boards securely fastened.

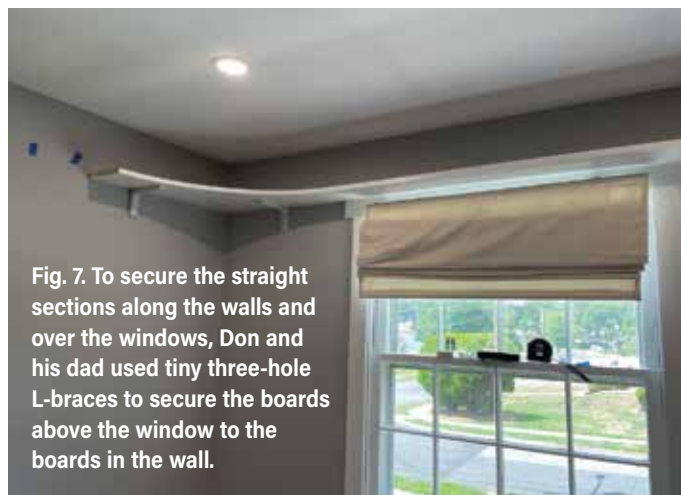


Fig. 7. To secure the straight sections along the walls and over the windows, Don and his dad used tiny three-hole L-braces to secure the boards above the window to the boards in the wall.

TRACK AND ACCESSORIES

I had a supply of Lionel FasTrack from a previous layout, so I used those old pieces. I discovered that conductivity was a problem, especially as the track got older. To eliminate this issue, I soldered each piece together, so every piece of track had perfect conductivity going to it (**Fig. 8**). While this was tedious work, if I did it right the first time I would never have to go back later to fix anything.

The biggest challenge was some of the FasTrack sections did not have notches cut into them, most notably the 30-inch straights. To have the wires fit nicely underneath the roadbed of the track, I needed to file down some notches in the track. In the end, it was all worth the effort. Lastly, I wanted to reduce the sound because, to be frank, FasTrack screwed down on wood is loud. I bought a roll of ¼-inch-thick cork to go under the track.

With accessories, I wanted to be simple. Why should the layout look crowded. Also, I didn't have a lot of empty space to work with, as the clearance on either side of the track was about 2 inches.

On the one wall I put a FasTrack illuminated grade crossing. It was 2 inches longer than I wanted, so I filed it down to fit it on the board. Using my fine-tooth hacksaw, I shaved off an inch from each side of the grade crossing. Additionally, I buffed out the insulated section on the track, so the gate would operate longer than the standard 5-inch section of track provided with the accessory.

On the other side, I added three Lionel illuminated billboards. I customized them to tie them to my family. I created advertising for my mom's community band, my father-in-law's electrical business, and an ice-cream shop my wife and I patronize. I wired them to the sections so they used track power (**Fig. 9**). I finished by securing in place two FasTrack girder bridges. On the blank girders I wrote my son's name with 2-inch-high commercial decals.

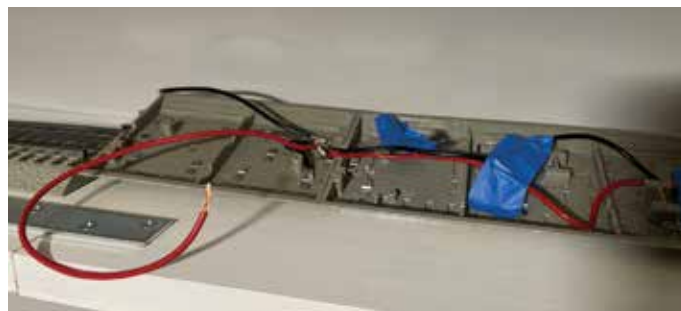


Fig. 8. Using old Lionel FasTrack sections from a previous O gauge layout saved money, but Don discovered that electrical conductivity was an issue. He solved that problem by soldering each piece together, so every piece of track had perfect conductivity going to it.



Fig. 9. Don wired a few trackside accessories along the right-of-way. Besides a FasTrack grade crossing, he added three Lionel illuminated billboards with his customized artwork.

POWER IT UP

To finish the project, I had to add power. I remembered seeing an electric outlet inside the closet and knew it would work beautifully for the Lionel CW80 Transformer I planned to use. I could put it on the corner piece inside the closet and wouldn't need to hide the cord of the transformer because it would already be hidden inside the closet.

The last addition was a gray felt tunnel portal I drew up to match the hole created in the closet. Then I made sure to test everything and was really pleased with my project.

TRAIN TIME

I had been dreaming about my son's first model train. We all remember our first engines, and I wanted my son's first experience to be memorable. Since we live in New Jersey and the Pennsylvania RR has always been one of my favorite railroads, I decided a Pennsy K4 4-6-2 Pacific steam engine would be the perfect choice.

I tracked down a Lionel No. 2132110 LionChief PRR Pacific. It runs using either Bluetooth or the LionChief universal remote, which turned out to be perfect for my son's small hands. I used MTH RailKing freight cars. I placed the *Sesame Street* figures in a gondola and used a piece of gaffer tape and a strip of black garden wire to secure them. They worked perfectly for all the characters except for Oscar the Grouch. He lives in a trash can and stands a bit taller, so I used a strip of hook-and-loop fastener to hold him in place.

I finished the overhead layout about a month before Patrick William was born. The first thing we did when we brought him home was show him his room and run the train (**Fig. 10**).

At only five days old, he looked in the direction of the train noises and had a look on his face like he knew this was going to be fun and get only better as he grew older. And that, as my wife and I can attest, is how it has been for him. **CTT**



Fig. 10. Sights like this one of a porthole caboose disappearing into a tunnel portal have amused Patrick William from his earliest days. His smiles made the project worthwhile.



NAP TIME TO SHOW TIME

NORM JURGEN ENGAGES HIS FAMILY IN
O GAUGE MODELING

STORY BY ROGER CARP // PHOTOS BY NORM JURGEN



Lionel's TrainMaster Command Control and Legacy facilitate the sophisticated operation desired by Norm and his son, Kurt. They appreciate everything that can be done with those systems when operating locomotives, including the Lionel No. 84067 Milwaukee Road 4-8-4 *Hiawatha* steamer in the photo shown at the top of this page.

Three great-looking levels of O gauge operation characterize Norm Jurgen's layout. They promise entertaining activity whenever he flips a switch – which he does just about every evening after his wife, Stella, and he finish dinner. Pushing himself away from the table and politely excusing himself, this veteran hobbyist looks forward to announcing that it's show

time on his three-rail display. Stella often will join her husband, as will their son, Kurt, if he's visiting mom and dad.

Are you surprised to read that all three members of the close-knit Jurgen clan have a love for the 16 x 18-foot layout? Asked about it, Norm shrugs his shoulders and replies that his wife and son have been engaged in the development and operation of the railroad from its beginning. In fact,



1 On a glorious afternoon in June, a newly married couple (left) prepares to embark on their honeymoon in a vintage roadster. Maybe they'll be boarding the Milwaukee Road passenger train that is going by on its way to the station in Jurgen Valley.

toy trains have been big parts of Kurt's life since he was born almost 30 years ago. When other infants were napping, he was accompanying his father to hobby stores, where he was introduced to every aspect of model railroading from N scale all way up to O gauge. It's really quite a story, one that's sure to inspire other dads and grandfathers eager to bring a new generation into model railroading.

EVERYTHING'S RELATIVE

Layouts have been Norm's stock in trade since his childhood. The scale of the trains entrancing him has changed, but the relative size of the displays he's constructed has remained nearly the same. To be specific, they have tended to be rectangular, with the sides being approximately twice as long as the ends.

Let's turn the calendar back to the 1970s. Norm, already in elementary school, received a starter set for Christmas and couldn't quit playing with it. But the Santa Fe steam engine and tender were built to HO scale proportions rather than O gauge. Was Norm disappointed without a Lionel train? Not at all! Even at the age of seven, he knew how to run the locomotive and cars in the Tyco set.

Norm's memories of how entertaining his boyhood layout had been never diminished, even after he put the HO trains aside for almost a decade after graduating from high school. Once he had married and become a father, though, he felt the

hobby tugging him back. Wisely, he offered up no resistance.

To the contrary, Norm jumped back into model railroading, although in a manner hardly conventional. Not too many men encouraged their spouses to return to work early while they took a three-month leave from their job to care for a newborn. But that's what Norm did

after Kurt was born. Besides handling the chores involved with a baby, he enjoyed pushing Kurt in his stroller for long walks each day. Train stores and hobby shops became their regular destinations.

"As long as I was there," Norm rationalized, "I might as well buy a section or two of track or possibly a freight car." He seldom departed without some kind of



2 Local residents have walked over to an observation area to admire the Union Pacific FEF 4-8-4 Northern creeping through town with refrigerator cars behind. The impressive Lionel product (No. 11131) may be the mightiest locomotive on Norm's roster.



3 The elegant paint scheme sported by Milwaukee Road 4-8-4 No. 260 truly makes it one of Norm's favorites. He particularly likes the orange stripes with maroon highlights, along with the range of details done in the same warm shades.

model railroad item tucked into the metal tray attached to Kurt's stroller. Only at that time in his life, Norm was indulging a newly discovered interest in N scale.

Maybe Norm was thinking smaller because Kurt was so tiny. Or N scale pieces were all the family's budget would permit him to purchase. Whatever the reason, he enjoyed the novelty of the 1:180 proportion models and soon completed a layout measuring 40 x 60 inches. Again, the size seemed just perfect.

READY TO GROW

As Kurt grew, his parents seemed more determined to keep broadening his horizons when it came to railroading. They traveled from their home to nearby communities to visit other hobby stores. Those memorable journeys elicited big smiles from the little fellow while they enabled his dad to expand his roster of N scale models. Family trips also encompassed visits to well-known tourist railroads and many other great scenic sights. Norm and



4 A different Milwaukee Road steam locomotive beautifully decked out in the legendary *Hiawatha* scheme passes laborers patching the street near the grade crossing. In the near distance, folks in the trailer enjoy watching the handsome steamer drift by.

Stella's enthusiasm for the hobby matured as fast as their son did.

Somehow, just as no one remembered when Kurt stopped acting like a little boy and took on the posture and emotions of a young man, Norm became less enamored with N scale and felt drawn to O gauge. The bigger trains and the bells and whistles associated with them swayed him. The products reaching the market in the 1990s and early 2000s seemed superior to anything offered in the past, and so Norm concluded building a three-rail layout promised a lot of fun.

What Norm envisioned was a large railroad incorporating three levels of action. Areas would have themes, some leaning toward realism and others toward whimsy. All those years of being a highly motivated and engaged dad had shown him the importance of acting in a playful manner, especially with trains.

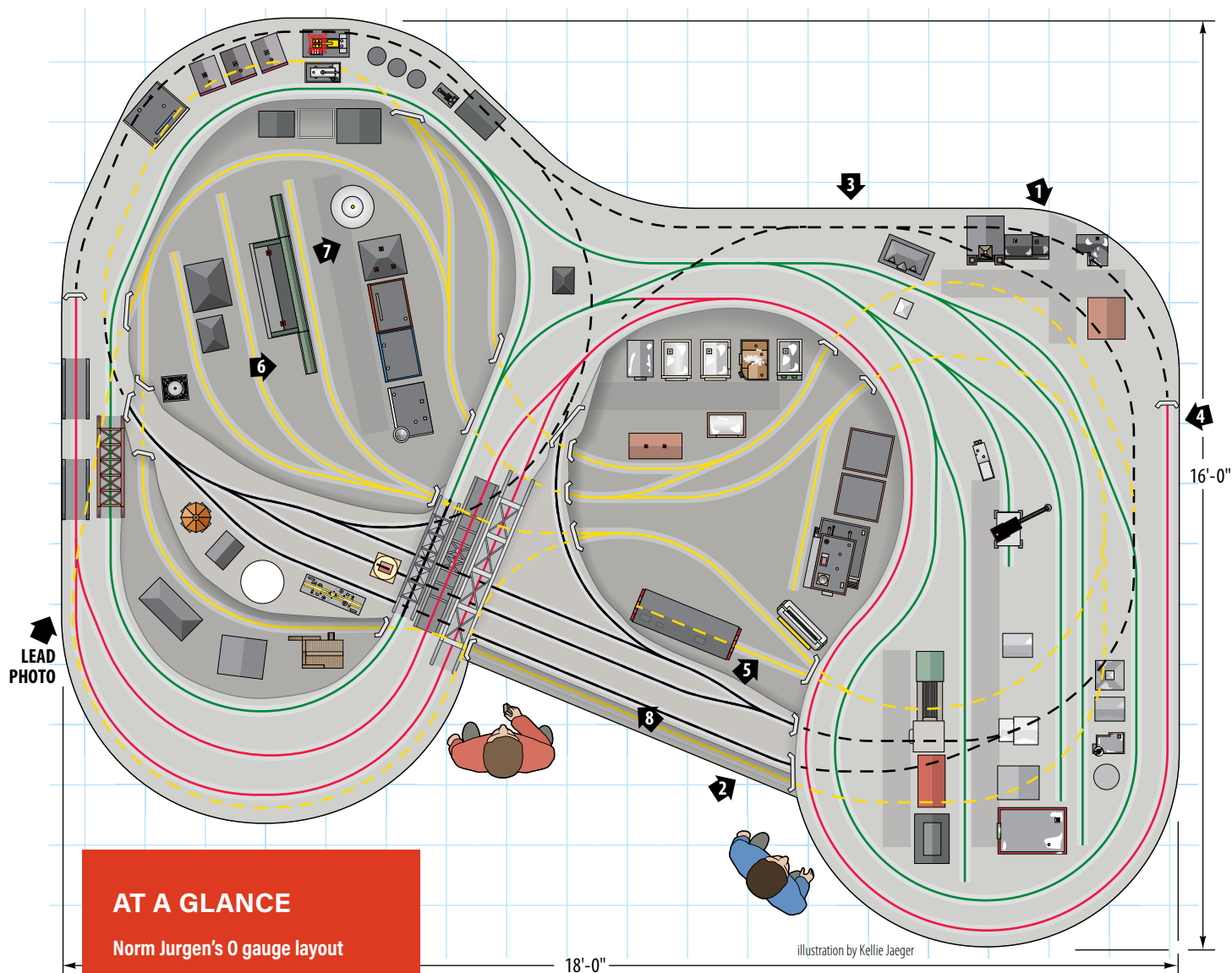
Eager to build a railroad unique in its personality and operation, Norm proceeded at a steady pace, with the backing and insights of his wife and son. The main level stood 38 inches off the floor; higher ones were erected 6 inches and 11 inches above. Sheets of construction-quality plywood served as the tabletop and grid support for the layout, with the framework consisting of several 2 x 6-inch pieces of construction-grade spruce. Select plywood 3/8 inches in thickness went on next for the roadbed.

Those components provided a solid foundation for the sections of Lionel Fast-Track Norm secured with screws. The outer loops featured O-72 curves and straights; the inner ones had slightly tighter O-60 pieces. If Norm had to do it all over again, he would have gone exclusively with O-72. His O-72 switches have been more reliable when it comes to performance and avoiding derailments.

COMMAND CONTROL RULES

From dipping his toes into the waters of command control when he entered the O gauge hobby, Norm has over time pushed off to dive into the deep end of the pool with Lionel's patented systems. At this point, he declares, every steam and diesel locomotive on this modest roster comes from that famous manufacturer and operates via TrainMaster Command Control. A few newer models depend on the Legacy system Lionel brought out to supersede TrainMaster Command Control.

Oddly enough, what persuaded Norm



AT A GLANCE

Norm Jurgen's O gauge layout

Dimensions: 16 x 18 feet

Track and switches: Lionel FasTrack
(diameters range from 60 to 72 inches)

Motive power: Lionel

Rolling stock: Lionel

Controls: Lionel Nos. 22983 180-watt
PowerHouses (9), CW-80 transformer
(5) with TrainMaster Command Control

Accessories: Lionel, MTH

Structures: Department 56, Lionel,
MTH, Woodland Scenics

Vehicles: Altaya, Atlas Editions, Corgi,
Detail Cars, Eligor Models, IST Models,
IXO, Minichamps, Oxford Diecast,
Premium Classixs Models, Premium
X, Signature Models, Spark Models,
Starline Models, Vitesse, Woodland
Scenics

Figures: Artista, Lionel, Woodland
Scenics



5 Two first-generation diesel switchers from Lionel handle their latest assignments while patrons of Stella's Diner focus on their eggs and coffee. The Creamsicle illuminated billboard comes from the MTH line (product No. 30-90089).



6 Flowerbeds filled with tulips and several vintage automobiles fill downtown Jurgan Valley with stunning color. No wonder passengers aboard the Milwaukee Road's famed "Beaver Tail" observation car crowd by the windows to catch a glimpse.

of the superiority of command control over the traditions of conventional mode was something Norm had observed as a youngster, long before TrainMaster Command Control ever made its debut. When he was growing up, a neighbor operated Märklin trains using a type of remote control. What Norm remembered about the ease and enjoyment of operation never left his thoughts, and so he promised himself to install something similar on his O gauge railroad.

Behind the control panel where Norm feels at home he counts nine Lionel 180-watt PowerHouses. They provide all the power necessary for operating four trains at once over the nine blocks actively controlled by TrainMaster Command Control.

The different Lionel and MTH operating accessories on the layout range from water towers to animated billboards and from oil derricks to streetlights. They pick up current through a bank of five No. 14198 CW-80 transformers.

A BUDDY'S HELP

"Don't forget to mention I named my layout the Jurgan-Lynch RR," our host says, "to show my gratitude to a good friend and fellow O gauge enthusiast, Owen Lynch." Retired after a career involved with railroading in Canada, Owen helped plan this three-rail display while offering plenty of great suggestions.

Norm, his confidence boosted, moved forward when developing the scenery in familiar ways. He began by fashioning the base out of pieces of Styrofoam insulation and crumpled sheets of tracing paper, which he proceeded to cover with plaster-infused cloth and Hydrocal modeling material. Hobby pigments colored the hardened shell. While the paints were wet, Norm sprinkled on various shades and textures of commercial grass, lichen soil, and turf.

Several of the scenic effects Norm liked best came from Woodland Scenics. He created roads using its Top Coat Asphalt

and Smooth-It Road products. Marshes were made out of Realistic Water and Surface Water. Finally, artificial snow from Woodland Scenics fell where appropriate in the mountains.

The forests Norm developed for his layout that always capture attention from viewers derived from a few sources. Department 56 provided winter birches and pines, along with trees showing signs of an early frost or without leaves. From Scenic Express, Norm bought miniature lodgepole pines and ponderosa pines. He had an impressive group of evergreens.

THREE AREAS

Norm expresses his greatest pride in the three areas given special identities because of the structures and details there. Buildings marketed by Department 56, Lionel, MTH, and Woodland Scenics became the blocks by which Norm developed downtown districts and residential neighborhoods were planned. Other spots came



7 Quite a clever move to excavate a cave in an otherwise solid rock formation and then arrange hikers. The vignette captures the attention of visitors who might ignore the area. The powerful Lionel No. 28850 New York Central GP30 road diesel is another reason they linger there.

together thanks to different structures and commercial figures.

The main community is known as Jurgen Valley. A thriving settlement, it boasts a railroad station, a department store, a conservatory, a police station, and two apartment houses. Nothing out of the ordinary there. However, visitors had better beware of the haunted house, known to be inhabited by ghosts and ghouls.

Safer for everyone is the village of Lynchmont. Besides having passenger depots, an organic farm, a schoolhouse, and many houses, it includes a prominent tourist attraction: Santa's Village. Composed of snow-covered porcelain structures from Department 56, it's the perfect place to stroll after a visit to the stately cathedral in town.

Most enchanting is St. Maris. Norm won't say why he added a medieval Irish hamlet to his layout. Maybe leprechauns invaded his home in the middle of the night and arranged items from the Dickens Village segment of the Department 56 product line. There is also a diner and a train shed from MTH and a hardware store and a paint retailer from Woodland Scenics. Trains arrive at the commuter station once every weekday.

READY FOR MORE

Stella and Kurt, always listening to Norm talk about the railroad, might have con-

cluded he was satisfied with what amounts to his first three-rail layout. And he'll admit to having accomplished more than he imagined he could when he started. Their encouragement plus insights from Owen made a huge difference.

All the same, like most O gauge modelers, Norm has begun thinking about his next effort. "I'm thrilled with this one," he told us, "but I'm looking forward to building a layout with a different configuration.

It will have as a key feature a dedicated rail yard, where I can park and move around my many freight cars."

When the time comes to start on the next layout, Norm can count on input from his family. Kurt in particular looks forward to helping, ever grateful to his dad for the fun they've had together since he was an infant eager to stay awake when the two of them skipped naps and visited train stores long, long ago. **CTT**



8 Bearing down on the main line, just in time for Norm to snap a great photo, is a unit tank train headed by Burlington Northern road diesel 5716. The Lionel No. 84282 General Electric U33C comes equipped with Legacy command control.

LITTLE SECRETS ABOUT LIONEL'S NO. 3494-550 MONON OPERATING BOXCAR

Nobody talks about a collectible variation

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY JERRY RINDONE

Collectors and operators of Lionel trains from the postwar era seek to acquire the 29 cataloged entries in the No. 6464 series of near-scale O gauge boxcars. Their enthusiasm often inspires them to look as well for the operating versions Lionel brought out. Among the most desirable of them is the No. 3494-550 Monon, cataloged for two years (1957 and '58) and offered only for separate sale.

While many postwar cars have a number of variations to collect because Lionel often modified them as the years progressed, the Monon operating boxcar has only one. Or does it? I'll let you in on secrets about this collectible model.

BASIC FACTS

According to the first volume of *Greenberg's Guide to Lionel Trains, 1945-1969* (2001) the 3494-550 used an unpainted plastic maroon shell made using the Type IIb body mold. It used white heat-stamping for the lettering of the number on the boxcar. In addition, a white-painted band stretched across the top of the roofline. "THE HOOSIER LINE" was heat-stamped in maroon on top of that white band painted along the roofline.

This car came with bar-end metal trucks and a brake wheel. It had unpainted maroon doors with multiple tack boards that came with a white-painted upper stripe on the doors to match with the white stripe painted along the roofline.

LITTLE SECRETS

When Lionel first produced the Monon Operating Boxcar, a key part of the road data, "BLT 6-57 BY LIONEL," was stamped on both long sides. However, as it continued to be produced, the stamping of the built date on the operating side of the boxcar started to decline. Only this element of the heat stamping got worse as production went on. It kept fading and eventually deteriorated almost completely.



Lionel cataloged the highly desirable No. 3494-550 Monon Operating Boxcar in both 1957 and '58. When this action-packed freight car was first produced, the "BLT 6-57 BY LIONEL" stamped on both long sides was clear and complete. Also, the blue figure installed inside had his left arm extending away from his body.



Over the course of production, the built date stamped on the operating side of the 3494-550 faded and eventually disappeared. In addition, Lionel decided to substitute a blue figure whose left arm was adjacent to his body. Designers probably made that change to resolve a problem caused by the first figure.

Lionel changed out the blue rubberized figure, too. In the early production run, the left arm of the man extended up and away from the body. Later, Lionel substituted a figure whose left hand was adjacent to the body. It probably made that change because the extended arm on the first figure sometimes would interfere with the opening and operating of the sliding door when the operation was energized.

Lionel made one more change to the Monon operating boxcar during production. It initially used a small standard

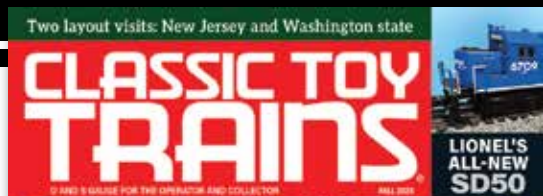
screw to attach the plastic shell to the metal frame. Assembly workers later switched to a Phillips head type of screw to attach the shell.

A final point: Personal observation and logic suggest that more Monon operating cars with faded or missing built dates should exist and therefore be worth less than examples with sharp and full dates. But experience tells me that those later models are selling for higher prices in auctions. Let's see how the toy train market responds to this article. **CTT**

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A highlight of the display of the late Dan Olson's American Flyer preproduction items at the National Toy Train Museum is this concept model of an Alco PA diesel decorated for the Southern Pacific. As the mirror reveals, designers at the A.C. Gilbert Co. painted and lettered the diesel on the shell of a Santa Fe Alco.

EXTRAORDINARY AMERICAN FLYER MOCK-UPS ON DISPLAY

The National Toy Train Museum features rare models

STORY BY ROGER CARP // PHOTOS BY CHASE KIRKLAND

➔ **Great Layouts You Can Visit!**, the brand-new 100-page special-interest publication coming soon from *Classic Toy Trains*, takes readers on a tour of 15 fantastic toy train displays across the United States that are open to the public. Besides operating O, S, and Standard gauge railroads, there are many informative and entertaining exhibits.

Standing out among the museums, clubs, and other facilities showcasing toy trains is the National Toy Train Museum, located in Ronks, Pa., not far from the larger and better-known communities of Strasburg, Lancaster, and York nestled near the Susquehanna River in the central part of the Pennsylvania. Our magazine has in the past shone light on the many outstanding operating layouts and fascinating exhibits of vintage American toy trains at the National Toy Train Museum.

Now we're pleased to present the latest attraction at the museum — a curated display of the extraordinary American Flyer engineering mock-ups, paint samples, and other preproduction models that formed the collection of the late Dan Olson. [*Classic Toy Trains* featured his collection in its July 1995 issue. — Editor]

This superb exhibit came together through the generosity of Bret Olson and the hard work of American Flyer experts Gary Baloun, Dennis Tichi, and Gilbert Uhler.

Dan was fortunate enough to attend the series of auctions held in the late 1960s that offered so many of the unique pieces once held in the Engineering

Department of the A.C. Gilbert Co. He acquired a large number of those rare and desirable models.

Even better, Dan worked with the Maury Romer, who had supervised the development of American Flyer trains and accessories during the postwar era, to

learn about the design and purpose of the dozens of rare locomotives, cars, and accessories he had purchased. Romer also assisted Dan in authenticating them.

Here and in future issues of CTT, we will visit the National Toy Train Museum to discover the treasures in Dan's collection of American Flyer rarities. These treasures should entice you to make a visit to the museum a priority. **CTT**



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The display of the late Dan Olson's American Flyer engineering mock-ups, paint samples, and other preproduction models occupies part of the National Toy Train Museum.

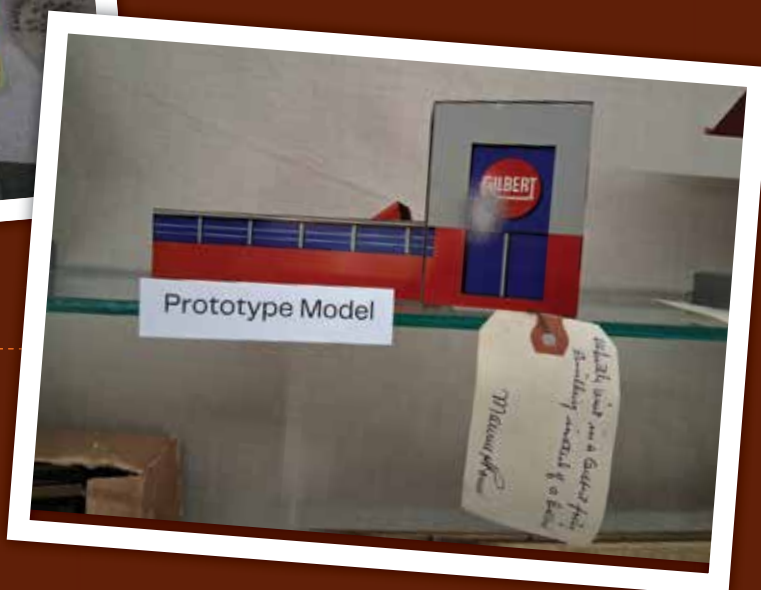
Members of the Engineering Department at A.C. Gilbert Co. fabricated wood mock-ups, including one for what became the American Flyer No. 25071 Tie-Jector Car (right), to instruct model makers on how to proceed with work on various items. They also studied products made by other manufacturers, such as the wood kit for an HO scale snowplow by Ambroid, to get ideas for what they could make.



The notes and tags provided by Maury Romer, based on his memories of what designers intended, serve as valuable sources of information to appreciate and learn from items in Dan's collection, such as this No. 23786 Talking Station.



Thanks to the prototype in the Dan Olson exhibit at the National Toy Train Museum, we know that engineers at Gilbert, accustomed to installing a whistle mechanism inside a billboard, were considering placing the device inside a structure meant to represent the firm's factory.





Rene Schweitzer (left) and Lionel's Product Manager Megan Fraser met in May to discuss how Lionel develops accessories. Ben Lake photo

THE LIFE CYCLE OF A LIONEL ACCESSORY

Learn how this iconic brand develops new items for your layout

BY RENE SCHWEITZER

Rene Schweitzer: We're at Lionel Trains' headquarters in Concord, North Carolina, and I am here with Meghan Fraser, product manager. We're going to talk about accessories! How many accessories, on average, does Lionel produce each year?

Mehgan Fraser: Typically, we will produce anywhere from two to six new accessories per catalog cycle. It really depends on what type of themes we might be supporting throughout the year.

RS: Where does Lionel get ideas for its accessories?

MF: We have a large collection of tooling that we have utilized throughout the years. We also take a look at trends or themes that might be popular. There are lots of different ways we might want to reintroduce or use tooling throughout the year.

RS: Let's say you have a brand-new idea for an accessory. How long from start to finish until the item is released?

MF: It can take anywhere from six months to more than a year to develop a new accessory. It depends on the amount of engineering that's involved. If it's a licensed product, it would depend on approvals from the various licensors that we have. If it is new tooling [starting from scratch], that can take a lot longer [than] if we're utilizing existing tooling.

RS: That's actually a pretty speedy turnaround. I was thinking it would take two years or more.

MF: We have a great engineering team that's always willing to work through development on different engineering projects, like accessories.

RS: What kind of challenges might come up as you design an accessory?

MF: There are a lot of different challenges that can happen. We're always trying to incorporate new technology in our accessories. We also are working within budget guidelines. Some of the tooling that we're utilizing is old. Are there any repairs that need to be made on this tooling?

RS: We have two accessories here – one classic, one newer; [let's talk about] the Lionel Gateman, first released in 1935.

MF: This is a really popular accessory. The Automatic Gateman has been around for a long time, and it's a perennial favorite. It is something that we do almost every few



The No. 2329300 Patriots Salute Gateman was first cataloged by Lionel in 2023. This new accessory features a saluting soldier and an American flag instead of a crossbucks. Photo courtesy of Lionel



The No. 2329340 Lionel Theatre reuses existing tooling. However, this popular new accessory features an updated marquee with flashing lights. It was first cataloged in 2023. Photo courtesy of Lionel

years. We try to find different ways to make it new and fun. This particular gateman is our Patriots Salute Gateman (No. 2329300). It has the classic look, but we changed it a bit. It has a new [figure] sculpted in it, with a soldier giving a salute as the engines go by. And rather than the classic crossbucks that are usually here, we switched to a flag instead. This Gateman is a perfect example of how we can reuse a classic accessory.

RS: How do you decide how long something is cataloged? I realize the Automatic Gateman may be an exception because it's been around for so many decades.

MF: Typically we have about one or two dozen accessories that are what we call "active items." Those are ones that get cataloged year after year. When we introduce a new item into the catalog, it can go anywhere from one to two catalog cycles. Some of it depends on how much stock we have left over after we've ordered it; we obviously have minimum order quantities from the factory. And if an accessory gains a lot of popularity, it gets considered to become an active item.

RS: That makes sense. You'll keep reordering if the demand is there. Let's talk

about the other new accessory we have [Lionel Theatre, No. 232934]. This is an example of reusing existing tooling.

MF: Correct. About two years ago, we celebrated Disney's 100th anniversary. When we did that, we also started looking at tooling that we had and how that tooling could fit into utilizing Disney's anniversary. We created this marquee that was used for the front of this building, not only to celebrate Disney's 100th, but also to become kind of a classic. So

while the building itself was existing tooling, we tooled up a brand-new marquee, with the fun alternating lighting on the front. Our creative team had a lot of fun

coming up with different movie titles. And again, this [the marquee] is now a tool; the marquee can then continue on for use on this building and others for years to come.

RS: That's great. You can build on what you have and add it to other products. What's your favorite accessory?

MF: This [the Lionel Theatre] is actually one of my favorite accessories. I'm also a huge fan of Lionel's Haunted House [No. 14072, cataloged in 2001]. It has lots of action, lots of different sounds. Over the years, as you work on these projects, almost every single one that you've kind of had a hand on becomes your favorite.

RS: That's true. There are many favorites! I really appreciate you taking the time to talk about accessories with me. **CTD**

"WE'RE ALWAYS TRYING TO INCORPORATE NEW TECHNOLOGY IN OUR ACCESSORIES."



Lionel's engineering department features an in-house test track to evaluate accessories and other products. Rene Schweitzer photo

MTH RailKing Alco RSD-5 diesel locomotive

The RSD-5 diesel locomotive was produced by Alco from 1952 through 1956. Just over 200 of these units were produced, a small quantity compared to the more than 1,200 RS-3s Alco produced earlier in the same decade. The RSD-5s produced 1,600 hp with just over 71,000 pounds of tractive effort. The three-axle trucks, each axle with a traction motor, allowed these locomotives to have an increase in tractive effort compared to their predecessors.

MTH cataloged this model in April 2023, and it was delivered in February 2024. This was the first release of the RSD-5 since 2018. Inside the box, the locomotive is tightly packed in plastic and foam. Foam inserts prevent the trucks from shifting while the model is boxed. The separately applied handrails and stanchions are protected by the inserts as well.

Once again, MTH has produced a fantastic model at an entry-level pricing. This RailKing unit comes in the scale proportions and operates on the manufacturer's Digital Command System with Proto-Sound 3.0, or conventionally.

This RailKing version of Alco's classic road switcher design measures at 14½ inches in length, slightly longer than 1:48 scale compared to the 56½ foot prototype. The model includes a die-cast truck frame, pilots, and fuel tank. It weighs 4 pounds, 8 ounces. It also comes with dual flywheel motors powering each truck, thus putting in 2.1 pounds of pulling power.

This model does not feature fixed pilots, a feature we may expect on a smaller locomotive in the Premier line. ElectroCouplers are found on each end, allowing for both switching and industry operations. It requires O-31 curves for operation.

The Metropolitan Division of the Train Collectors Association (METCA) produced two custom runs of the RSD-5 in Santa Fe zebra stripe and the Baltimore & Ohio scheme (which you see here, both in two different road numbers).

The B&O colors pop on this locomotive, and the lines are crisp and don't show signs of overspray or bleeding. The sound file features the classic Alco rattle of the prime mover, which makes this, and really

MTH RAILKING ALCO RSD-5

Features: Proto-Sound 3.0, O-31 operation, onboard DCC/DCS decoder, metal handrails and horn, and more

Road names: See text

MSRP: \$389.95

Website: mthtrains.com



any other MTH Alco model, something that will stand apart from other road switchers in your collection. This B&O rendition includes hand-painted crew figures situated long hood forward.

MTH cataloged three road names: Chesapeake and Ohio (30-21170), Southern Pacific (30-21172), and Pennsylvania

(30-21171). Of course, there were also a number of custom runs. METCA released in B&O (30-21210, 30-21209) and Santa Fe (30-21208, 30-21207); Stockyard Express did a Nickel Plate Road version (30-21213); and Public Delivery Track produced two road numbers of the Utah Railway (30-21206, 30-21205).

The model MSRP is \$389.95, a \$40 increase from the 2018 release. Keep in mind that this product, even though it's from the RailKing line, includes many of the same features as in the Premier line, including scale proportions.

For those looking to add to their fleet without breaking the bank, check out your local hobby shop or METCA's website to add one of these great models to your collection today. — Chris Montagna



MTH Premier Norfolk & Western J-class 4-8-4

MTH Electric Trains has released an O gauge Norfolk & Western J-class 4-8-4 for the first time since 2020.

From 1941 to 1950, the Norfolk & Western Railway designed and built 14 Class Js at its East End Shops in Roanoke, Va. The 611, built in May 1950, is the only surviving J-class locomotive and currently resides at the Virginia Museum of Transportation in Roanoke. Its recent 75th anniversary makes MTH's release timely.

OUT OF THE BOX

MTH offers five variations of the Class J, including two versions of No. 611: the "Spirit of Roanoke" (20-3947) and an in-service version (20-3948). This review focuses on the in-service No. 611.

Coupled together, the 27¾"-long engine and tender certainly matches the prototypes' sleekness with a look that is full of spunk and strength. The colors and lettering are sharp without a trace of runoff.

The stripping's Tuscan red of N&W fame is certainly an eye catcher, as the color can be all over the place in terms of being too bright or too dark on modeled locomotives and rolling stock. The Tuscan red looks to be on point.

The model has separately applied grab irons, a realistic coal load, cab curtains and chain links on the tender trucks. The running gear, notably the Timken, roller-bearing tandem side rods, is a highlight, especially when seen in motion as the model is on the track and at speed.



ON THE TRACK

There was a snag when operating this particular model for the first time. The quartering on the third set of drivers was off, resulting in a binding when attempting to move. This was immediately diagnosed and corrected, thanks to our friends at Sommerfeld's Trains & Hobbies. A search through multiple forums and social media postings showed no mentions of similar teething issues from the other recently-released Js.

With the quartering problem corrected, it's a night-and-day difference in performance. The model is a smooth runner. Even at 1 smph with the DCS, the normal stuttering and speed fluctuation one would find is minor and mostly unnoticeable.

The Proto-Sound 3.0 system from the speakers sounds great with certain features coming straight from No. 611 including the bell and whistle. However, I do wish that MTH had updated the latter's sound files, as the 1:1 counterpart now carries an authentic Hancock Long Bell Three Chime from one of her sisters.

MTH's smoke units have always been heavy-duty, and that proves to be the case



again as demonstrated by the substantial amount of smoke from both the main stack and steaming whistle, even after a half-hour of priming the units and fill reservoirs.

Please note that the stack and whistle come with their own smoke units, with the steam whistle feature only accessible from the DCS remote and the Standard (\$4.99) version of the downloadable app. Unlike recent models by MTH, the steam effect for the whistle also won't come out of the whistle itself, but from a hole in the body just below the detailed part.

MTH's website states the minimum curve is O-54, though the locomotive was able to slowly take the O-48 radius on the *Classic Toy Trains'* CT&T layout.

The actual smph vs. the commands from the DCS

matches up for the most part. The strength test from the drawbar was at 4 pounds.

This is a must-have for O gauge fans of the Norfolk & Western Railway, the Js, or No. 611. — *Lucas Iverson*

MTH PREMIER NORFOLK & WESTERN J-CLASS 4-8-4 (NO. 20-3948)

Features: ProtoSound 3.0, synchronized puffing smoke, steaming quillable whistle, wireless drawbar, flickering firebox glow, operating headlight, marker, numberboard, cab interior, and tender back-up lights

Roadnames: See text

MSRP: \$1,599.95

Website: mthtrains.com

Atlas O Premier C44-9W diesel locomotive

Atlas recently sent us one of its new O gauge “Dash 9” diesel-electric locomotives from the Premier line: the C44-9W. General Electric built more than 3,500 of these between 1993 and 2004.

Atlas announced this great model in mid-2024, and product No. 30138376, Santa Fe No. 627, arrived in our offices in late May.

OUT OF THE BOX

First impression: this is an amazingly detailed model. Comparing it to prototype photos, everything looks right on, except for one thing – the gap between the shell and the trucks. To allow the truck to pivot through tighter curves, parts were omitted above the truck. It’s an unfortunate yet necessary design.

Out of curiosity, I compared the Atlas model with photos of other manufacturers’ C44-9Ws. MTH’s had a similar gap, while Lionel’s was smaller (with a smaller radius recommendation of O-36 versus Atlas O’s O-42). Third Rail offered a brass model many years ago that had the smallest gap. I reached out to Atlas twice with a question about this gap via email, but no one there responded.

That being said, there are oodles of impressive details, such as the red fuel fill, the added grab irons and handrails, and much more. All the added placards and graphics were legible – impressive for such tiny items!

The warbonnet paint scheme was crisp and nicely done. I found no flaws in the paint anywhere on the body.

The model weighs a hefty 5



lb. 9 oz., and measures 18¾” long including the couplers. It scales out almost perfectly (less than half an inch difference) to 1:48 proportions compared to prototype drawings I found online.

ON THE TRACK

This impressive model can be operated conventionally or using MTH’s DCS system. If you’re using MTH’s Track Interface Unit (TIU) system plus the add-on Wi-Fi (WIU) module, either the app or a DCS remote control can operate the engine. If you’ve upgraded to MTH’s WTIU system, you’ll need to use the app, as the wired tether to operate the remote is not yet

available as of this writing (mid-June 2025).

I used the WTIU system with the app on my smartphone to start the engine. It scanned and recognized the engine immediately, adding to my active list.

The model crawled along stiffly at first at 2 smph. You may wish to reduce the default volume of the sound system. I made Senior Editor Roger Carp jump in surprise when the engine started up!

The C44-9W is equipped with Proto-Sound 3.0, and sounds great. After a few minutes on the track, the diesel exhaust started and the output seemed quite appropriate.

LED lights are a wonderful

ATLAS O PREMIER C44-9W, THREE-RAIL VERSION

Features: Proto-Sound 3.0, onboard DCC/DCS decoder, 2 remote-controlled ProtoCouplers, O-42 operation, operating LED ditch lights, ProtoSmoke diesel exhaust

Road names: Alabama & Gulf Coast (Veterans Unite), BNSF/ex-Santa Fe, Norfolk Southern (two versions), Santa Fe (two versions), Southern Pacific, Union Pacific/ex-Southern Pacific, Union Pacific (future network)

MSRP: \$679.95

Website: shop.atlasrr.com

innovation, adding extra detail without drawing a lot of current. The operating ditch lights are nice, as are the illuminated number boards.

In summary, the C44-9W from Atlas is quite a looker and has impressive sounds to boot. If you run diesels from the 1990s through the 2000s, you’ll want to add this one to your fleet! — *Rene Schweitzer*

RMT Atomic Energy Commission ore car



The history of ore cars dates back to around the time of the Civil War in the 1860s, when they were primarily made of wood. Body construction shifted to steel, starting in the late 1880s to the early 1900s, allowing for increased strength and capacity in the cars.

Ready Made Toys (RMT) has released a new version of its O gauge ore car, and the company sent us a sample of the Atomic Energy Commission car. If the AEC is not your cup of tea, no worries. The car is available in 54 other road names, including custom runs for the Choo Choo Barn, Strasburg RR, and many others. View the complete list on RMT's website.

READY MADE TOYS ORE CAR (RMT- 967093)

Features: removable ore load, O-36 operation, die-cast metal trucks

MSRP: \$39.95

Website: readymadetoys.com

I compared this car to one my husband purchased a couple of years ago. The car bodies seem identical, but flip the cars over and you'll see the difference. The trucks have been modified. The truck sideframes seem the same (a general freight truck design), but the rest of the truck is different. Note the differences in the comparison photo above.

I also weighed the two cars. The older car weighs 9.6 ounces, while the new car weighs 9.4 ounces.

Graphics are pad printed, except for the car number, which is a small decal. There is a bit of a glossiness to it. If the decal's shine bothers you, a quick spray of Testor's Dullcote should tone it down.

The body is attached to the frame with four tabs that snap into what could be called roping staples. One of the tabs was not fully snug against the frame, but it was easy to snap the tab into place by hand.

This ore car has some really nice details. For instance, the model includes molded stirrup steps below the sill, which other manufacturers omit from their models.

The wheels also have "Ready Made Trains" raised lettering on the faces.

The sticker on the clam-shell packaging suggests O-31 operation, but RMT's website states O-36. I emailed owner Walter Matuch to clarify this matter, and he confirmed that O-36 is the correct designation. He also stated that the stickers have been updated to reflect this change.

The trucks were very tight on this car. They were so tight that the car would not navigate any curves on our CT&T layout. Of the four cars I received for review, this was the only car affected.

Fortunately for me, however, the fix was very easy. I used a small putty knife to separate the frame from the body a bit. I could then lift the tabs away from the roping staples. I accessed the screws through the holes in the top of the frame, loosened the screws a bit with a flathead screwdriver, and carefully snapped the car back together.

The ore load is removable, and is easily released with a small putty knife or a flathead screwdriver. This inspired a

future project. Wouldn't it be fun to spray-paint this load with glow-in-the-dark paint? It would be a crowd-pleaser to see a string of these ore cars with glowing loads.

This is a solid piece of rolling stock. There are also limitless opportunities to customize the cars to suit your needs without breaking the bank.

Note: If you're interested in purchasing any of RMT's products, please contact your local hobby shop or retailer. RMT does not sell direct to the consumer. — *Rene*

Find more reviews on Trains.com:

- Atlas O Premier GP38-2 Conrail No. 8061
- *Toy Soldiers: Building and Refining a Collection* book
- MTH Premier N&W 4-8-4 J class Northern steam locomotive video
- Atlas O Premier C44-9W, two-rail version video
- RMT CPKC boxcar
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Events Rate: \$45 per issue (55 word maximum). Ads will contain the following information about the event: state, city, sponsoring organization and name of event, meet, auction or show, dates, location, times, admission fee, name and/or telephone number and/or email of person to contact for information. Name, daytime telephone number and street address of the person providing the information is also required but need not be included in the ad. Unless otherwise requested, ads will be published in the issue month that the event occurs in. Additional months are available at the \$45 per issue fee. Please specify issue date(s).

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Schedule of Events

CA, CARMICHAEL: Sac-Sierra TCA Toy Train Show. Elks Lodge, 5631 Cypress Ave., Carmichael, CA 95608. Saturday, October 4, 2025, 10am-3pm. Admission \$10.00, children 12 and under FREE w/paid adult. Buy/Sell/Trade, operating layouts, free parking, food. Free train set drawing for 17 and under (must be present to win). Contact: Bryan Stanton at brsta@comcast.net

CO, ESTES PARK: Rails in the Rockies XXVIII. Estes Park Events Complex. September 20-21. Saturday 10am-5pm, Sunday 9am-4pm. Admission \$10; kids free w/adult. Large operating layouts, club layouts, all scales, exhibits, vendor tables, activities for kids. Fun for the whole family! 25,000+ square feet of railroad excitement! Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/railsintherockies>. Email: estesparktrainshow@gmail.com. Website: <https://railsintherockies.org>

FL, OCALA: Lions Tri-Annual Train Show. First Christian Church, 1908 E. Fort King St., Ocala, FL 34471. Saturday, November 1, 2025, 9:00am-2:00pm. Model trains, accessories, detail parts and toys. Admission \$5.00, children 12 and under free w/paid adult. Bring two canned goods and receive \$1.00 off admission. Food/snacks available. Information: Bob 352-694-6381 or cell 352-547-0938

IA, DELMAR: Delmar Train Show & Swap Meet. October 11-12, 2025. Saturday 10am-4pm and Sunday 10am-2pm. Delwood School Gym, 311 Delmar Avenue, Delmar, IA 52037. Admission: Free Will Donation. Free tours of Delmar Railroad Museum. Vendor tables: \$25 each (limit 10 tables per vendor). Food & drink available. Free parking/handicap accessible. Information: bradgeneralcontractors@gmail.com

MA, TAUNTON: OLD COLONY MODEL RAILROAD CLUB ANNUAL MODEL RAILROAD SHOW. Sunday, September 21, 2025, 10:00am-3:30pm. Taunton Inn & Conference Center, 700 Myles Standish Blvd., Taunton, MA 02780. Route 495, Exit 25. Adults \$5.00, children under 12 (accompanied by an adult) & scouts in uniform FREE. For more information visit: www.oldcolonyrailroadclub.com

MI, EAST LANSING: Lansing Model Railroad Club Show and Sale. Michigan State University Pavilion. Sunday, November 9, 2025, 10:00am-4:00pm. Admission \$8.00, under 12 free. Michigan's largest train show: layouts, demonstrations, and 500+ tables. Free parking. Flyer, table forms and map, visit: www.lmrc.org or call John Hartmann 517-290-8948

MI, LINCOLN PARK: Lincoln Park Train Club Train Show (Buy & Swap). Saturday, October 4, 2025, 11am-3pm. JFK Memorial Bldg., 3240 Ferris Ave., Lincoln Park, MI 48146. Admission is \$5.00, under 12 FREE. Vendor tables are \$20.00. For more info: Bob @ 734-675-5712 or Henry @ 313-623-8581 or John @ 734-676-8645.

MN, ST. CLOUD: GRANITE CITY TRAIN SHOW AND SALE. River's Edge Convention Center, 10 4th Ave S, St. Cloud, MN 56301. Saturday, November 8, 2025. 9:00am-3:00pm. \$6.00, Kids 10 and under FREE. Buy/sell model/toy trains, books, videos, railroad collectibles. Operating model and toy train displays. Win a LIONEL train set! 612-558-6484; GraniteCityTrainShow@gmail.com or visit www.GraniteCityTrainShow.com

MO, JOPLIN: Joplin History & Mineral Museum Model Train Show and Swap Meet. Saturday, November 8, 2025. 9am-3pm. In Schifferdecker Park, 504 South Schifferdecker Ave., Joplin, MO 64801. Admission: \$5 adult, 12 and under admitted free with paid adult. Swap Tables \$20 each. Contact Steve Gardner, 620-230-9545 or email: sogardner1@att.net

MO, ST. LOUIS: 34th Annual Greater St. Louis Metro Area Train Show sponsored by Mississippi Valley N Scales. St. Louis Community College-Meramec Gym, 11333 Big Bend Rd., Kirkwood, MO 63122. October 11-12, 2025, Saturday 10am-4pm; Sunday 10am-3pm. Admission: \$10, kids 12 and under FREE! All scales-swap tables-layouts-grand prize drawing! Free parking. David Johnson, 636-225-2405, <https://mrvns.railfan.net>

NC, RALEIGH: Neuse River Valley Model RR Club 41st annual FALL TRAIN Show: November 8-9, Sat 9-5; Sun 10-4. NC State Fairgrounds. 400 tables of model railroading, 12 operating layouts. Displays & Judging of Craftsman Structures & Rolling Stock. Admission: \$10 covers both days, children 12 and under free with an adult. Contact: bobwitwer@gmail.com. Visit: www.nrvclub.net

NH, DOVER: The Great Northern New England Train Show. Dover Lodge of Elks #184, 282 Durham Road, Dover, NH 03820. Saturday, October 25, 2025, 10:00am-3:00pm. Admission: \$5 per person, children under 12 free. Exhibitor tables \$35, includes entrance fee. All scales, operating layout, railroadiana items, and food on premises. Contact Ed Martin, efmter@aol.com or 603-362-4300

NJ, BRICK: ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents The Brick Train Show. Elks Lodge, 2491 Hooper Avenue, Brick, NJ 08723. Sunday, November 2, 2025, 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: \$7.00; under 12 free with adult. John LaLima 732-845-5966. Go to www.eastcoastrainparts.com and click on The Brick Show.

NJ, EAST RUTHERFORD: METCA/NYSME All Gauge Train Show. November 1, 2025. St. Joseph's School, 120 Hoboken Road, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. 9am-2pm. METCA/NYSME members admitted free at 8am, public at 9am. Admission: \$5.00 per person 16 and up. Layouts, refreshments, and door prizes. For tables and information, contact the NYSME Office at 201-939-9212 or email: contact@modelengineers.org

NJ, WAYNE: ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents The Wayne Train Show. P.A.L. Hall, 1 Pal Drive, Wayne, NJ 07470. Sunday, October 26, 2025, 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: \$7.00; under 12 free with adult. John LaLima 732-845-5966. Go to www.eastcoastrainparts.com and click on The Wayne Show.

NY, HAMBURG: TCA Upstate NY Chapter Toy Train and Collectible Toy Show! St. Mary's of the Lake Church Hall, 4737 Lakeshore Rd. (Rt. 5), Hamburg, NY 14075. Saturday, September 27, 2025. TCA Members: 8:30am, General Public: 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: Adult \$5.00, Children 12-17 \$3.00, Upstate Chapter Members & children under 12, free. Contact: Mike 716-913-4195, Email: tca.upstatenychapter.events@gmail.com

NY, LINDENHURST: Long Island Classic Train Show/Swap Meet. Fireman's Memorial Park, 555 Heling Blvd. (north of Hartford St.), Lindenhurst, NY 11757. September 14, 2025, November 2, 2025, January 4, 2026, and February 8, 2026. 8:30am-1:00pm. Adults \$5.00, under 16 free w/adult. 100+ tables. Handicap accessible. Contact: John Mitchell 917-596-3494 or John Miata 516-353-1751. Email: LIClassicTrainShow@hotmail.com

OH, DAYTON: 49th Original Dayton Train Show. The Montgomery County Fairgrounds, 645 Infirmary Road, Dayton, OH 45417. November 1-2, 2025. Saturday 11am-5pm and Sunday 11am-4pm. Admission: \$10.00 per adult, children 12 and under free with a paid adult. Gail Yarnall, PO Box 341233, Beavercreek, OH 45434, 937-424-6413. Email: NMRA.Div.3@gmail.com or visit: www.DaytonTrainShow.com for updates.

OH, MASSILLON: CJ Trains Winter Train and Toy Show. Massillon Knights of Columbus Hall, 988 Cherry Road NW, 44647. Sunday, December 14, 2025, 10:00am-3:00pm. Admission: \$5.00, 12 and under FREE. \$25/dealer table, 152 - 8' dealer tables. Jon Ulbright, PO Box 446, Wooster, OH 44691, 330-262-7488, cathjon@ssnnet.com www.cjtrains.com

PA, ALLENTOWN: ATMA First Frost Train Meet. Allentown Fairgrounds Agri-Plex, 1925 W. Chew Street, Allentown, PA 18104. November 8 & 9, 2025. Saturday 9am-4pm, Sunday 9am-3pm. Advance tickets \$15, admitted at 8am. At the door, admitted 9am: \$10 adults, 12 and under FREE with adult ticket purchase. For more info, visit: www.allentowntrainmeet.com or call 610-442-2859

PA, YORK: The Barry King Memorial Train Show. Reliance Fire Hall, 1341 W. Market St., York, PA 17404. Mon-Wed, October 20-22, 2025. 9am-5pm; Open to the public, free admission. All gauges of trains and vintage toys. 8-ft. tables for all 3 days are \$60 ea. For information contact Todd or Bev Metcalf, 860-432-2124, or email: trainsmore@aol.com

VA, FREDERICKSBURG: Rappahannock Model Railroaders 28th Annual Christmas Model Train Show, December 13-14, 2025. Operating G, O, S, HO, N, Z and LEGO train layouts. Vendors, Santa, train set raffle and kids area. Saturday 9am-5pm, Sunday 10am-4pm. Adults \$10. Youth 13-17 \$5. Under 13 free. Eagles Lodge, 21 Cool Springs Road, Fredericksburg, VA 22405. Info: www.mrrailroaders.com

WA, CHEHALIS: Lewis County Model Railroad Club, Annual Fall Train Show and Swap Meet. Southwest Washington Fairgrounds, Blue Pavilion Building, 2555 N. National Ave., Chehalis, WA 98532. October 18-19, 2025. Saturday 10:00am-4:00pm and Sunday 10:00am-2:00pm. Admission \$5.00. Free parking. Contact information: Ted, 360-985-7788, or email: TedsTrains@LewisCounty.com

WA, LONGVIEW: November 22, 2025. LK&R Model Railroad Club presents our 2025 Holiday Model Train and Toy Swap Meet. Cowlitz County Event Center, 1900 7th Ave. 10am-4pm. Admission \$5.00. See <https://www.cowlitzeventcenter.com/contact-event-professionals/>. Scroll down for directions. Information for vendors and guests, visit: <http://lkrtrains.yolasite.com> or contact Howard Flick. 360-751-7276, email: flickh@yahoo.com

WA, SPOKANE: River City Modelers Fall Model Train Show, Spokane Fairgrounds, 404 N. Havana. Sunday, October 12, 2025, 9:30am-3:30pm. Admission: adults \$8, 12 & under free. 200+ tables of Railroad-related items for sale, operating layouts, Free-MO, Operation Lifesaver & more. Free Parking. For table rental or general info, contact: Shirley Sample, 509-991-2317 or email: shirleysample13@gmail.com

WI, MONROE: Green County Model Railroaders 47th Annual Model Train Show & Swap Meet. The Stateline Ice and Community Expo, 1632 4th Avenue West, Monroe, WI 53566. September 27-28, 2025. Saturday & Sunday, 10am-4pm. For information contact Kevin Johnson, 608-558-9332, or visit: www.gcmrrinc.org

*All listed events were confirmed as active at the time of press.
Please contact event sponsor for current status of the event.*

S Gauge for Sale

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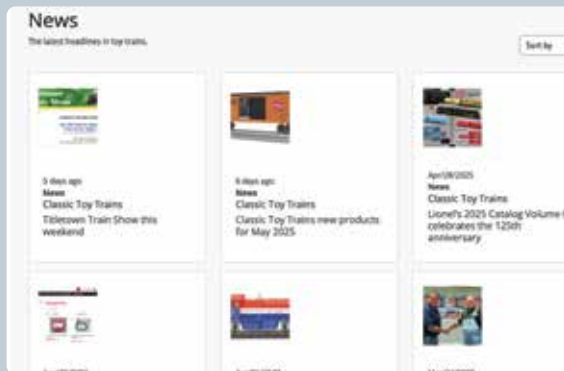
Toy trains in Argentina

Learn all about the Hornby, Matarazzo, and Elektro toy train lines from the 1920s through the '60s in this fascinating article from Gerald Manley.



Model an underground mine

Many layout owners include the entrance to a mine on their layouts, but few build the underground section. Karl Sablich shares how he added a copper mine, built underneath his primary O gauge layout, complete with lots of extra details.



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MAKE A REMOVABLE BOXCAR LOAD



■ Most modelers leave their boxcars bare and unused. If you're looking to press these cars into service, I'll explain how to build a removable sled freight load.

Start by taking measurements of your boxcar. Measure diagonally from the upper corner to a lower corner of the door frame (measurement 1). This will establish the maximum length of your sled. Now measure the interior width between the boxcar's doors (measurement 2). Be sure to take into account door clearance when establishing the width of your sled.

Cut a thin plastic strip to fit the maximum length measurement of your sled (measurement 1.) This will form a flexible base for your decking. Cut wood strips to match the width of your car (measurement 2.)

Using black and gray acrylic paints diluted with water, weather each wood strip. Coat each surface of the strip to minimize warping. Use strokes with varying pressure and shades; this will add a natural look to the wood.

After your strips have dried, lay them out to form the basis of your decking. Affix your thin plastic strip with glue to form the spine that holds the decking together.

When everything has dried, test-fit your load in the boxcar. If needed, trim the assembly to fit flush and snug.

Use items like crates, pallets, and drums to provide visual separation between where the wood decking starts and ends.

This load provides a great way to enhance the realism of your boxcars without permanent alterations. – Alex Weihmann

PROJECT LIST

- Boxcar
- Thin and flexible scrap plastic or styrene
- Wood strips (I used scale 2 x 6 lumber)
- Boxes, barrels, drums, etc. for a load
- Acrylic paint



ADHESIVE FOR FOAM BOARD

■ Foam board can be attached using a variety of adhesives. One of my favorites is latex caulk. The caulk provides quick grab and has about 30 minutes of working time, allowing for easy repositioning of parts. If you change your mind later, it's easy to pry up the foam with a putty knife. When selecting a caulk, be sure to use one that is foam-safe, as some contain solvents that will damage foam. Acrylic latex caulk is almost always safe for foam. –David Popp



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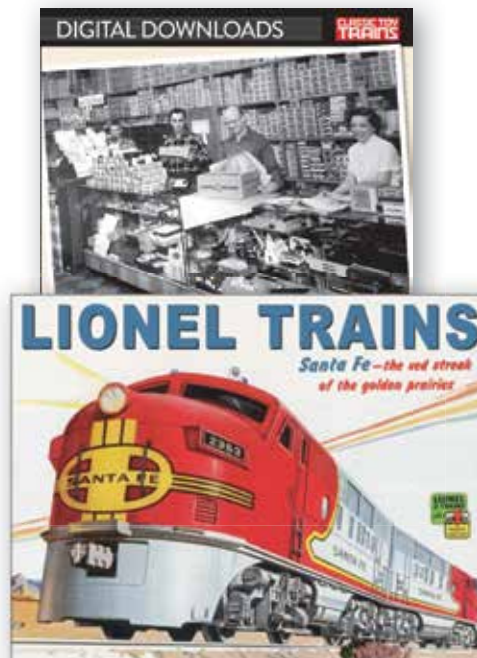
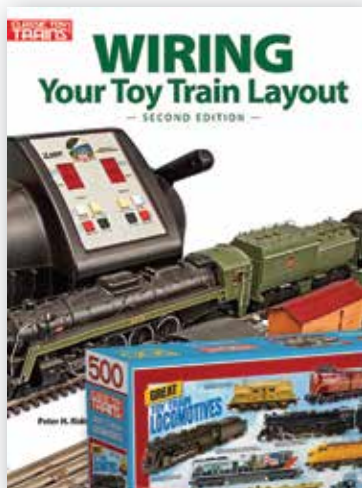
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