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- Madison Hardware memories
- Lionel at the 1904 World's Fair

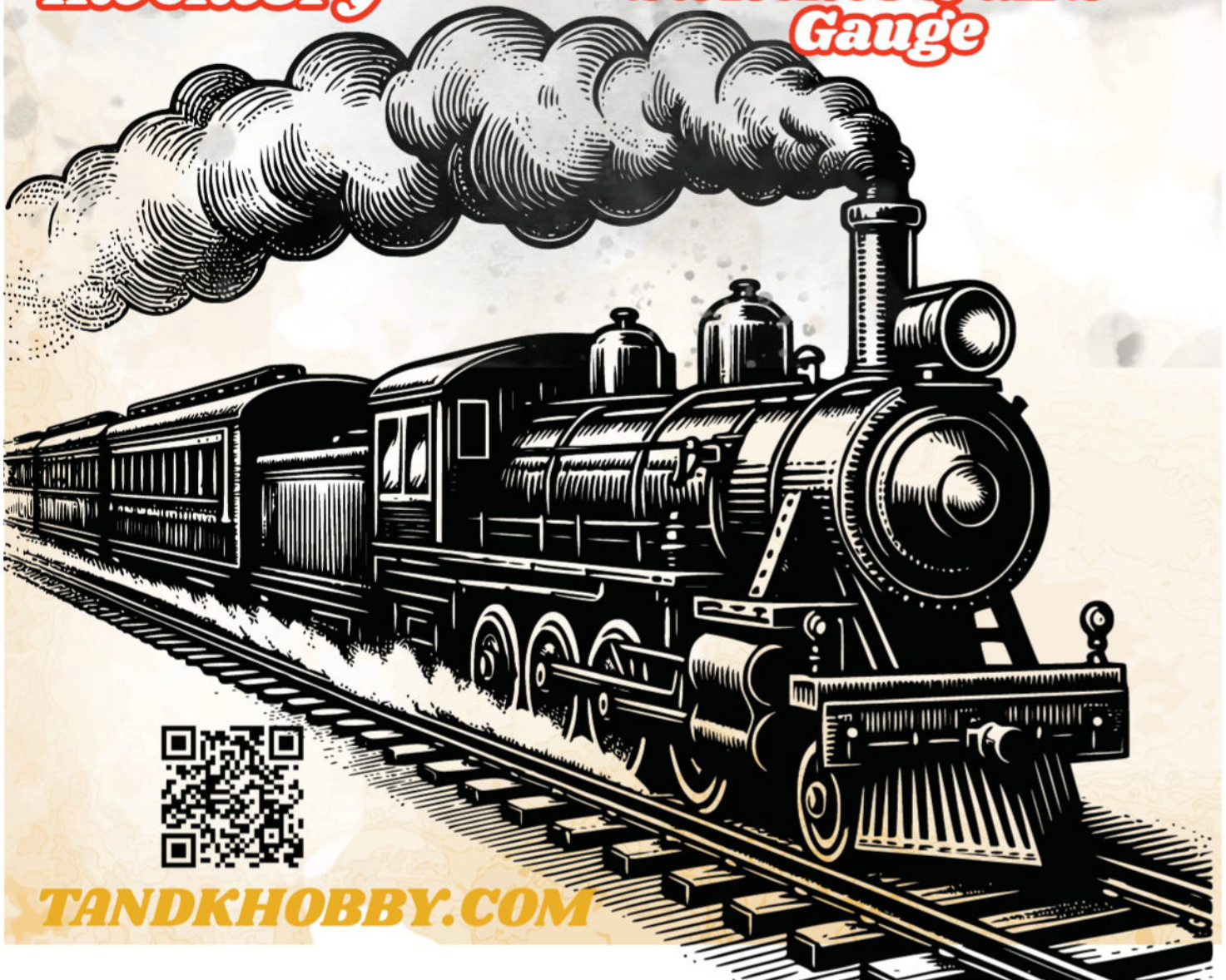
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Striking the right balance

Editor Dick Christianson, in the premier issue of *Classic Toy Trains* (Fall 1987), introduced the contents of the then-new magazine. “The subjects will be historical and current — what was produced and what *is being* produced. All of this information will be presented in a manner that captures the color, the fun, the sheer joy of toy trains.”

It’s meaningful to read Dick’s description, as I’ve had discussions with readers who insist CTT not include new toy trains because of the word “classic” in the brand’s name. Even in that first issue, though, eight pages were devoted to new products, including a two-page spread showcasing notable new items.

Senior editor Roger Carp and I don’t take the contents of each issue lightly. We meet regularly to discuss upcoming issues, making sure they are well balanced. What does that mean? We aim to include in every issue two layout stories, historical information, coverage of several eras and manufacturers, how-to projects, and at least one track plan. In addition, we include the staples you’ve come to expect, like product news, product reviews, and tips.

I always try to include one “surprise” story in each issue. Maybe it’s a new topic like using a Bluetooth accessory (Spring 2024), downsizing a



Selecting a mix of content is always a balancing act. Cody Grivno photo; scale courtesy of Eric White

collection (Summer 2024), or an interview with a manufacturer. This issue’s interview with MTH, for instance, is the first Q&A with that manufacturer since March 2010.

On Trains.com, I’ve pushed the envelope further, publishing stories on toy trains in Argentina and post-war trains by Hafner and Kusan, plus interviews with young hobbyists. Roger has written stories about metal railroad heralds in cereal boxes and collectible items, such as Lionel’s No. 520 Boxcab Electric, along with his thoughts on new releases from the latest Lionel catalogs.

If you have thoughts on the balance of stories, please let us know. As Dick wrote in our first issue, “The magazine’s future is up to you. We look forward to hearing from you.”

Rene Schweitzer, Editor

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

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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BEST WISHES, JOE

Joe Mania has been CTT’s Q&A columnist since the September 2011 issue, sharing accurate and helpful answers to your questions for nearly 15 years. He has decided to retire from writing to spend more time with his other train business endeavors. We thank Joe for providing assistance to so many readers over the years. We wish him only the best in the future! The Q&A column will return in the Summer issue.

» SUBMISSIONS?

Articles and photos are paid after publication. Before preparing an article, please contact us to determine interest. To submit an article or photos, email editor@classictoytrains.com or send materials to *Classic Toy Trains*, 18650 W. Corporate Dr., Suite 103, Brookfield WI 53045. Submission guidelines are available at trains.com/ctt/magazine/contributor-guidelines. *Classic Toy Trains* assumes unsolicited materials are contributed gratis. We assume no responsibility for the safe return of unsolicited material.



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Solving Madison Hardware mysteries

Articles like the ones Lionel authority Paul Leone Peters wrote in the Winter 2024 and Summer 2025 issues about the unique Lionel cars and motorized units made by Madison Hardware Co. in the postwar era are the reason I subscribe to *Classic Toy Trains*. Over the years, I've run across a few of the tank cars mentioned and wondered what they were and whether they were legitimate Lionel production.

Thanks to these two excellent articles, I now know the full story behind models that were until recently total mysteries to me. — Lawrence Oakley

Felt the magic of toy trains

I've been a faithful subscriber to *Classic Toy Trains* for more than 20 years and have never been so struck by the Editor's Note as I was by Rene's in the Winter 2025 issue. The Christmas morning photo with her and her dad, complete with the family cat and shag carpet, is priceless, as were her closing remarks.

I can only imagine that all of you at my favorite hobby magazine have been through some challenges and turbulent times recently. But I want you to know how much I enjoy and appreciate the product you create. — Mike DiNanno

Relic from Chicago

The special-interest publications from *Classic Toy Trains* are among the very best sources of information about the history of Lionel and other postwar brands. The one from last year, *Display Layouts and Showrooms*, is no exception. I especially enjoyed Roger Carp's article on the showroom Lionel maintained in Chicago. It reminded me of acquiring from a former employee there a painting of a railroad scene. I thought your readers would like to see it, although the steam locomotive is a Union Pacific 4-8-8-4 Big Boy and not a Lionel model. — Dennis Kletecka



This painting of a Union Pacific freight train may be the only surviving relic from the showroom Lionel had in Chicago.

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▲ Don and Cheryl Confarotta's O gauge layout

Even though more than 10 years have passed since Don and Cheryl Confarotta moved into their current home in Fairport, N.Y., they're still improving the O gauge railroad they managed to reassemble there. A focal point on the layout is the village of Parkway, where kids have gathered in front of Don's Delicatessen before crossing the street to peek in the windows of Edna's Toy Shop. They may miss the Pennsylvania RR passenger train headed by Alco PAs from K-Line that's about to make its way past the business district. The 17-foot-long backdrop was painted by Elizabeth Hill, a family friend, and it adds depth and visual pleasure.

Send your 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 photos must be taken with the camera set at the largest-possible file size. Digital photos can be submitted on a disk or CD 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 www.ClassicToyTrains.com/SubmissionGuidelines. That will lead you to a number of thoughtful tips on improving your photographic skills as well as assistance with depth-of-field, lighting, and composition.



▲ Kyle Miller's O gauge layout

Having served as the president of the Canadian Toy Train Association, Kyle Miller should be expected to appreciate each and every railroad based north of the American border. And this resident of Coquitlam, British Columbia, assured us that he really does. However, the photograph Kyle took on his O gauge layout showcases the power of only the Canadian National RR. We're admiring a pair of Electro-Motive Division SD70M-2 diesels decorated for the CN. On the service track at the rear is a Lionel model. Meanwhile, an MTH Premier Dealer Appreciation model leads a westbound train in the foreground.

► Alex Mason's O gauge layout

Get the impression that Alex Mason owns a boatload of trains? He's lined with walls of his comfortable train room in West Chester, Pa., with shelves to display his Standard gauge classics as well as magnificent sets from every era of Lionel's production. And on his layout, Alex likes to operate his *Blue Comet*, a Santa Fe passenger set from the postwar era, and a Union Pacific streamliner dating from prewar days. Be sure you check out the many operating accessories Alex added to the scene.



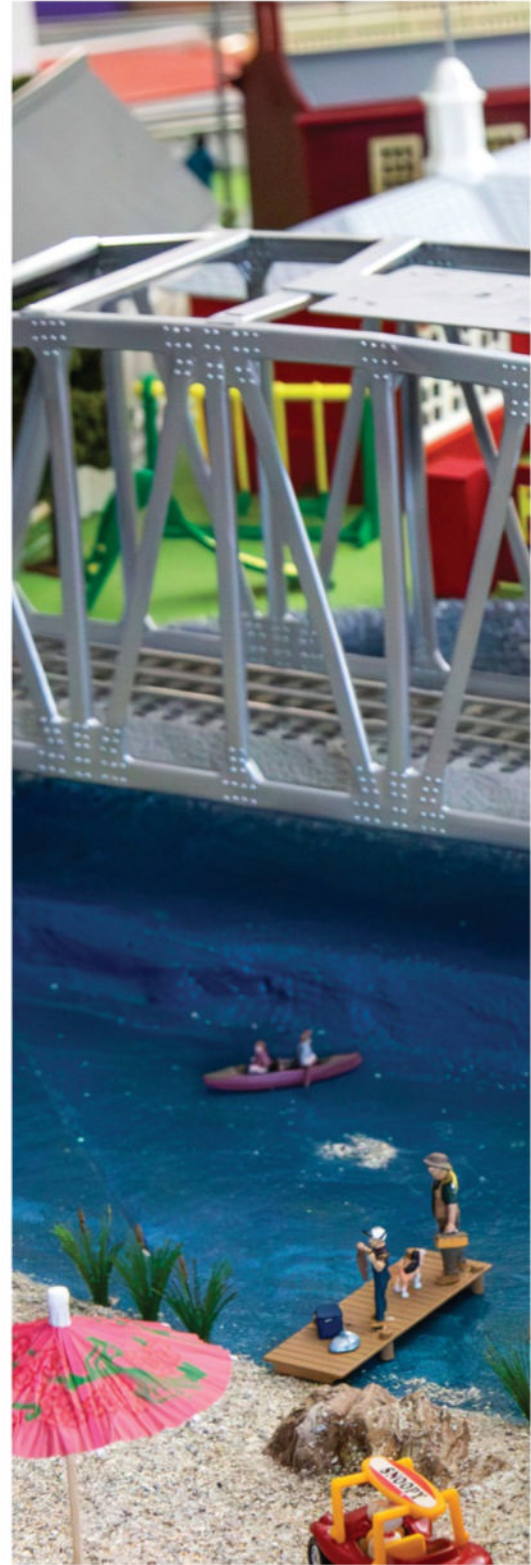


▲ James Leitten's O gauge layout

The New York Central served many communities in Ohio during its heyday, but LaGrange, where James and Mary Leitten make their home, was not one of them. Even so, Jim confesses to a love of that famous railroad because of the Lionel No. 2344 New York Central F3 diesels he received as a boy in 1952. His passion for Lionel trains from the postwar era has never abated, as this scene on his 14 x 20-foot O gauge layout proves. A few of his No. 6456 Lehigh Valley hoppers are busy serving the bauxite mine, where many local residents are employed. Sven Jorgenson & Sons Co. is one of several structures built from vintage Suydam kits.

▶ Ron Rossi's O gauge model railroad

Work on Ron Rossi's 15 x 33-foot O gauge layout, the fulfillment of a lifelong dream, began about 12 years ago at his home in Leesburg, Fla. Assisted by his friend Ed Walther, Ron handled every aspect of construction on the multiple-level, three-rail empire, where he runs postwar classics, such as this Lionel No. 2245 *Texas Special* F3 diesel. From complex wiring and custom controls to imaginative scenery and automation, this layout reflects technical mastery, storytelling, and friendship. Plus plenty of support from family members, including Ron's wife, Arlene, and their nephew, Cameron Kurtiak, who took this picture. Ron's YouTube channel offers a closer look at his layout in motion: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uWmYx_Nkkw





▲ Nick Merola's O gauge layout

The placid scene Nick Merola photographed on his O gauge railroad in Holbrook, N.Y., contrasts vividly with the short films and video games he spends much of his time producing. You won't find a zombie or demon or knife-wielding lunatic in sight as a Santa Fe train carries passengers on their journey west amid Plasticville U.S.A. buildings. Kids relax along one side of a river while athletes practice for their next football game on the opposite side. No one needs to fear monsters rising from the waters or leaping out to tackle and devour one of the unsuspecting players. Maybe Nick will combine his interests on a Halloween layout next! You can check out his work by going to imnickmerola.com

NEWS BITS



■ **New Atlas O catalog**

The Atlas O Fall 2025 Premier catalog has been published on the manufacturer's website. Highlights include a new GP30. The O gauge locomotive includes Proto-Sound 3.0, onboard DCC/DCS decoder, detachable snowplow, O-42 operation, and road-specific ditch lights. Available road names: BNSF, Indiana & Ohio, Nickel Plate Road, Norfolk & Western, and Raritan Central. Available in 3-rail version only. Price: \$729.95.

The latest additions to the Atlas All-Scales Signal System include Hooded Modern Signals. They're available as single-head or double-head models and in left- and right-hand versions. Price: single head, \$39.95; double head, \$49.95.

New O gauge figure sets include a six-piece set of Miners, a 12-piece set of Station Platform Passengers, a 12-piece set of Railroad Workmen #1, and a six-piece set of Gas Station Figures.

View the entire 48-page catalog at shop.atlasrr.com

■ **LCCA Lionel Kid's Club celebrates 15 years**

The Lionel Kid's Club by Lionel Collectors Club of America (LCCA) celebrates its 15th anniversary in 2026.

Founded in 2011, the club provides Junior Members (ages 18 and younger) with five issues per year of the LCCA's *The Lion Roars* magazine, the *Lion Cub* magazine, free copies of the annual Lionel product catalogs, and special activities at the LCCA National Convention each year.

Lionel Collectors Club of America has created a special logo featuring Lionel's Lenny the Lion mascot to mark the Kid's Club anniversary. The organization is planning other special activities and memorabilia for Junior Members to promote their involvement and generate new memberships.

Kid's Club Coordinator Patrick Cudzilo states, "We are going to make this Kid's Club anniversary last all year for existing members and encourage new members to join and enjoy the fun of model trains. Many Junior Members joined after hearing about LCCA at train shows around the country, and others have gotten involved by running their trains with their parents and grandparents."

Learn more about the LCCA and the Lionel Kid's Club by the LCCA by visiting Lionelcollectors.org. Junior Memberships can be purchased on the club's website. Annual dues are \$30; first-time members pay a one-time initiation fee of \$10.



■ **Sunset Models 3rd Rail announces catalog club**

Sunset Models 3rd Rail has announced a 2026 Sunset Models 3rd Rail Catalog Club. For \$59.99 per year, members will receive two printed, full-color catalogs (spring and fall) mailed to their residence two days before the public online release; early access to new product announcements, and a chance to win free products by finding the "Golden Ticket" hidden inside the catalog. To learn more or to join the Sunset Models 3rd Rail Catalog Club, visit thirdandtownsendmodels.com

■ **Lionel 2026 catalog**

Lionel Trains has released its 2026 catalog. The 172-page catalog includes new items from the VisionLine, Legacy, LionChief, Harry Potter, and "Battery O" lines.

Highlights include a number of United States semiquincentennial locomotives and rolling stock, including a 4-4-0 brass hybrid steam locomotive (No. 2631620) and a Legacy 4-4-4-4 T1 American Freedom Train in two versions (Nos. 2631430 and 2631440).

Also featured is a VisionLine GP40-2, a Legacy 2-6-6-6 Allegheny, and a Legacy C44-9W.

For more information or to view the entire catalog, visit lionel.com



Collection of clubs: Robert Osterhoff, 1622 Garden Valley Dr., Wildwood, MO 63038, is selling *The Clubs of Lionel 1929-1967*. The DVD contains original documentation of prewar and postwar Lionel membership clubs. The DVD can be viewed on Windows- and Apple-based computers. **Price: \$18 plus \$5 shipping.**

Website: trainpaper.com

Lots o' parts: MTH Parts & Sales, 7393 Washington Blvd., Ste. 101, Elkridge, MD 21075, offers new parts lists for RailKing and Premier locomotives. Find parts for popular engines like the USRA 0-8-0, Union Pacific 4-12-2, and more. Visit mthpartsandsales.com to view parts inventory, exploded diagrams, and product manuals.

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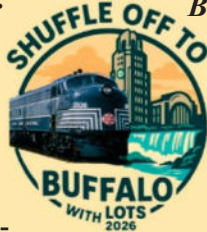


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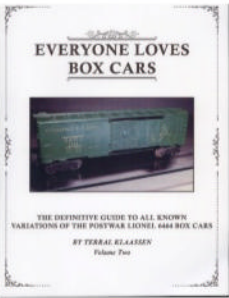
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Beefy bumpers: Menards has a two-pack of O gauge tubular track straight sections with lighted bumpers (No. 75-93054). The 5-inch sections include an end-of-track obstacle with an LED-illuminated sprung bumper. **Price: \$7.99. Website: menards.com/trains**



Special set: The Lionel Collectors Club of America (LCCA) has announced a Lionel custom-run Southern Pacific passenger set for their members. The O gauge train includes an FT A-unit diesel locomotive, *Crocker* coach car, *Phelps* dome car, and *Hopkins* observation car, with all of them decorated in the Southern Pacific's "black widow" paint scheme. **Price: \$430.** To learn more about the LCCA, visit its website at lionelcollectors.org.



Beloved boxcar: Klaassen Trains & Hobbies, P.O. Box 401, Hydro, OK 73048, has published an expanded edition of *Everyone Loves Box Cars: The Definitive Guide to All Known Variations of the Postwar Lionel 6464 Box Cars*. The 40-page softbound book lists variations of the popular No. 6464 near-scale boxcars. **Price: \$30** via check or money order, shipping included in the U.S.



Bold boxcar: Trainworld, 751 McDonald Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11218, is selling a 50-foot waffle-sided boxcar as part of the Premier line. The O gauge freight car is available in two road numbers and features O-31 operation (No. 20-99483 shown). Expected delivery in February 2026. **Website: trainworld.com**



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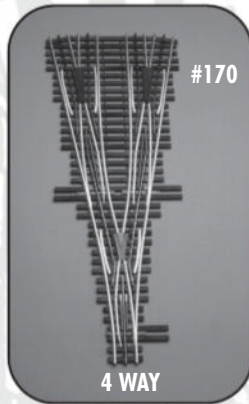
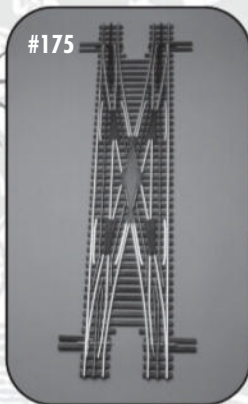
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Frosty beverages: The Milwaukee Lionel Railroad Club, 2721 S. Calhoun Rd., New Berlin, WI 53151, is selling a custom-run Lionel woodside refrigerator car three-car set. The O gauge freight cars will be available to club members in three paint schemes featuring Sprecher brewery/root beer graphics. Expected delivery in July 2026. **Price: \$255 plus tax and shipping.** To become a member or learn more, visit milk-lrcc.org



Fabulous fitters: Menards markets a two-pack of O gauge tubular track straight sections (No. 75-9305). These 5-inch fitter sections have black ties and measure 1½" wide (rail to rail) and 2½" wide (tie to tie). **Price: \$3.99. Website: menards.com/trains**



Nice Northerns: MTH Electric Trains, 7393 Washington Blvd., Ste. 101, Elkridge, MD 21075, is selling Great Northern S-2 4-8-4 Northern steam locomotives as part of the Premier line. The O gauge engines feature onboard DCC/DCS decoders, steaming quillable whistle, wireless drawbar, and O-42 operation (No. 20-30123 shown). Expected delivery in April 2026. **Price: \$1,699.99. Website: mthtrains.com**



Logging action: Atlas Model Railroad Co. Inc., 378 Florence Ave., Hillside, NJ 07205, has added an operating log dump car to the Premier line. The O gauge car includes an operating dump mechanism, a load of logs, and O-31 operation (No. 3001968 shown). Requires one piece of No. 6097 Accessory Rails track for operation (not included). Expected delivery in third quarter of 2026. **Price: \$109.95. Website: shop.atlasrr.com**



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- Feb 21-22 Vallejo, CA - Solano County Fairgrounds
- Feb 28 - Mar 1 Sacramento, CA - Cal Expo
- Mar 1 Wheaton, IL - DuPage County Fair
- Mar 14-15 Fort Wayne, IN - Allen County Coliseum
- Mar 21-22 Wilmington, MA - Shriner's Auditorium
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Brennan's Ob Long Box Co. O gauge structure kit

LAUNCHING THE
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TRIBUTE SERIES

For the past 25 years, I've been writing "Collectible Classics." The purpose of this popular department has always been to identify and tell the story behind models from every era of toy train production that were both worthy of attention and affordable for the vast majority of our many great readers.

The selection for this column reflects a slightly different approach. Rather than focusing on a locomotive or accessory with a noteworthy story of its own, I went with a contemporary structure kit that pays tribute to a legendary O gauge modeler who built one of the finest and most influential layouts ever in the hobby.

The Ob Long Box Co. is a kit created by Brennan's Model Railroading to honor one of the structures the pioneering builder Frank Ellison made for his famous Delta Lines layout in the postwar period. This contemporary kit enables folks currently in the hobby to link their three-rail layout with a historic one and therefore, like Dennis Brennan himself, to honor the heritage of O gauge trains.

DELTA LINES

Frank Ellison stepped out of the shadows of O gauge railroading in the 1930s to become a well-known and highly respected figure, thanks to the dozens of articles he wrote to popularize model trains and show fans of his work how to develop an action-packed and entertaining layout. He did so by describing the planning and design of his Delta Lines railroad and outlining how he created and built many of the unique residential, commercial, and industrial structures on it.



Ellison wrote for *Model Builder*, *Model Railroader*, *Toy Trains*, and other hobby publications. Of special importance were how-to articles on building from scratch his various structures, all of which he gave humorous names. Back in the 1930s and '40s, as Dennis Brennan, the owner of Brennan's Model Railroading based in Independence, Mo., reminds us, "There were no building kits and detail parts like we have today. Ellison made everything out of cardboard with features like corrugations drawn in with ink and colored with oil-base artist colors."

Brennan decided to bring back to life Ellison structures that have survived or have been lost. He wanted to do so using contemporary materials and modern methods. This worthy goal animates Brennan's neat Frank Ellison Tribute Series.

OB LONG BOX

There were many candidates among the Ellison structures for launching Brennan's series. He settled on the Ob Long Box Co. That structure found a spot on Delta Lines and was featured in the December 1952 issue of *Toy Trains* magazine. Everything needed to build it was published there.

After studying that article and using artistic and modeling skills refined over a

lifetime as an O gauge builder, author, and photographer, Brennan came up with his limited-edition kit priced at \$130 as another of the superb products he sells.

Ob Long Box Co. measures 8¼ x 11 x 7⅝ inches. The foundation is basswood. The factory walls are ⅛-inch-thick mounting board with 3M peel-and-stick backing for attaching the separate corrugated-cardboard overlay.

The interior mounting-board floors, center internal wall, and exterior walls rely on tab-and-slot joints to help assemble a sturdy and warp-free structure. The office has Northeastern Scale Lumber clapboard siding and Grandt Line windows. The factory windows come from Korber.

HONORING A LEGEND

Brennan's Model Railroading has continued to expand its Frank Ellison Tribute Series with three more easy-to-build renditions of structures just right for O gauge layouts. Let's hope the firm keeps bringing out more of these terrific kits.

Even if you don't get them all, please learn about Ellison and the concepts he delineated for making any model railroad gratifying and entertaining. Dennis Brennan wisely believes that all of us are standing on Ellison's shoulders. **CTD**



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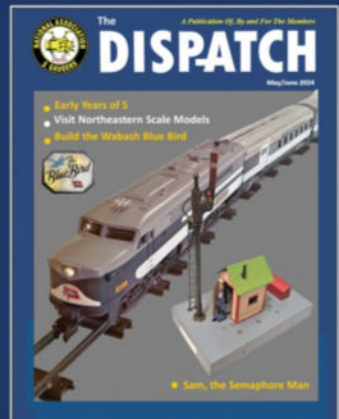
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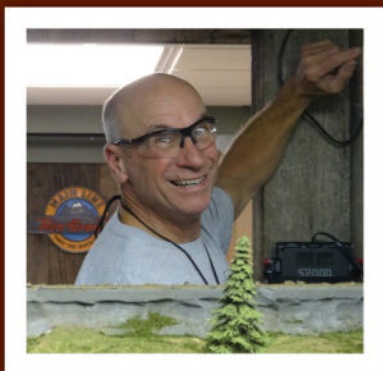
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Clem's layout keeps him rolling

HOW ONE O GAUGER USES WHAT HE'S LEARNED

STORY BY ROGER CARP // PHOTOS BY CHARLES STOIA





As much as Clem enjoyed building the trackwork and the wiring, his favorite part of the O gauge hobby boils down to being able to run long trains over long mains.



CLEM KRZECZKOWSKI may not remember one of the biggest-selling country tunes of 1980, but then he hardly needs to since as a professional truck driver he has lived its lyrics. Truly, this lifelong O gauger has applied what he learned during his long and grueling career to the design, construction, and operation of the great layout he enjoys operating alone or with a group of fellow toy train enthusiasts.

Let's turn the clock back more than 45 years, when Eddie Rabbitt topped the pop and country charts with *Drivin' My Life Away*, his tune about life on the highways of America. The chorus declared, "I gotta keep rollin'" – which Clem can identify with. His life and his layout attest to a powerful urge to keep moving.

The life lessons Clem's decades hauling freight imbued in him, along with the many trips he has taken aboard Amtrak passenger trains across the U.S., have influenced what he has constructed and how he runs it. They have also given him the impetus to help other people in planning layouts with depth and meaning.

RIGHT FOUNDATION

Clem's vocation and his avocation go a long way in explaining why he pays so much attention to foundations. As one who spent decades behind the wheel of a tractor-trailer, he knows the importance of being able to accurately assess the strength of the roads being traveled and determine how well they could handle the loads he was carrying in different kinds of weather. A solid and level foundation was vital for his safety and success.

Similarly, Clem makes it a habit to focus with intensity on the roadbed and track whenever he's taking a vacation on an Amtrak train. Doesn't matter whether he's riding the *California Zephyr*, *Southwest Chief*, or *Empire Builder* – he wants everything to be right. What's paramount is not only his comfort but also the need to translate what full-size railroads do to the O gauge displays he builds.

1 The 22 x 36-foot O gauge layout Clem enjoys operating features models of vintage as well as modern locomotives running over a double-track main line fashioned out of GarGraves flextrack. A long career in logistics, along with many trips on Amtrak, has influenced Clem's realistic modeling.

This foundation of observation and knowledge motivated Clem to spend a lot of time and effort assembling the benchwork for the 22 x 36-foot railroad being showcased here. He invested in top-grade lumber and then carefully built the open-grid framework required to provide a sturdy and stable foundation for it. That every element would be tough enough to support the network of three-rail track envisioned, along with the array of scenic effects and structures, was a given.

Over the basic skeleton Clem put down ½-inch-thick pieces of plywood where track was going to be laid. An equally thick layer of Homasote went on next to reduce the noise to be made by the long and powerful trains he aimed to run.

The solid and significant foundation, once finished, would scarcely be visible to Clem and his visitors. Yet he more than anyone else knew it was the key to the success of his railroad. As critical was the track, and for purposes of realism and stability, he chose flexible sections made by GarGraves Trackage Corp.

With extraordinary patience and skill, Clem bent them to get the large and gradual curves that he deemed necessary for a prototypical appearance. We're talking about minimal diameters of 96 inches and maximum diameters of 122 inches. There would be nothing abrupt or tight about the curves on this massive layout, not after he had superelevated them and added impressive easements.

DIFFERENT FOUNDATION

The skillfully crafted benchwork and admirably formed GarGraves track represented one type of foundation for Clem's outstanding layout. He enhanced the latter with Ross Custom Switches manipulated by either Caboose Industries hand throws or Tortoise Slow Motion switch machines from Circuitron.

The patient and careful application of



2 The entire environment in Clem's spacious train room, from the floor to the ceiling, has been designed to make spending time there whether working on the layout or running trains a pleasant and comfortable experience.

commercial ballast upgraded the look of the trackwork even more.

Yet after talking with Clem about his background in the toy train hobby, a second and perhaps equally noteworthy kind of foundation becomes apparent, one also critical to the development of his model railroad. This one doesn't involve anything as concrete or obvious as the lumber, rails, and ties, however; still, Clem probably couldn't have created his masterful three-rail display without it.

Family is the foundation under consideration. Clem steers conversations about his home layout back more than 70 years to Christmas of 1953. A mere three years of age then and growing up in the suburbs of Detroit, he received a Lionel O-27 freight outfit headed by a No. 2055 short

4-6-4 Hudson and whistle tender. Set No. 1503WS featured three pieces of rolling stock and a No. 6257 Southern Pacific-type caboose. Collectors might dismiss the engine and its cars as commonplace, but to Clem they were – and still are – treasures.

Packed away except for a few weeks each year before and after December 25, the Lionel train grew in meaning for the Krzeczowski family. As Clem became older, he was handed responsibility for assembling the oval of three-rail track beneath the gaily decorated Christmas tree. His roster, of course, continued to expand, with remote-controlled switches and motorized units.

Although Clem's father was strict about how often the Lionel models could be used, he firmly encouraged his oldest son

to maintain an interest in the hobby and refine his skills. At the same time, he was silently influencing Clem's choice of a job, as he drove trucks in Michigan and its neighboring states.

UPGRADES FOR ENGINES

The vision Clem nurtured for this, the finest O gauge display he would ever build, derived in large part from his veneration of prototype railroads, especially the New York Central. Among the greatest lines in the nation's history, its network traversed Michigan and left indelible impressions on Clem. Honoring the Central was high on the list of goals for his big layout.

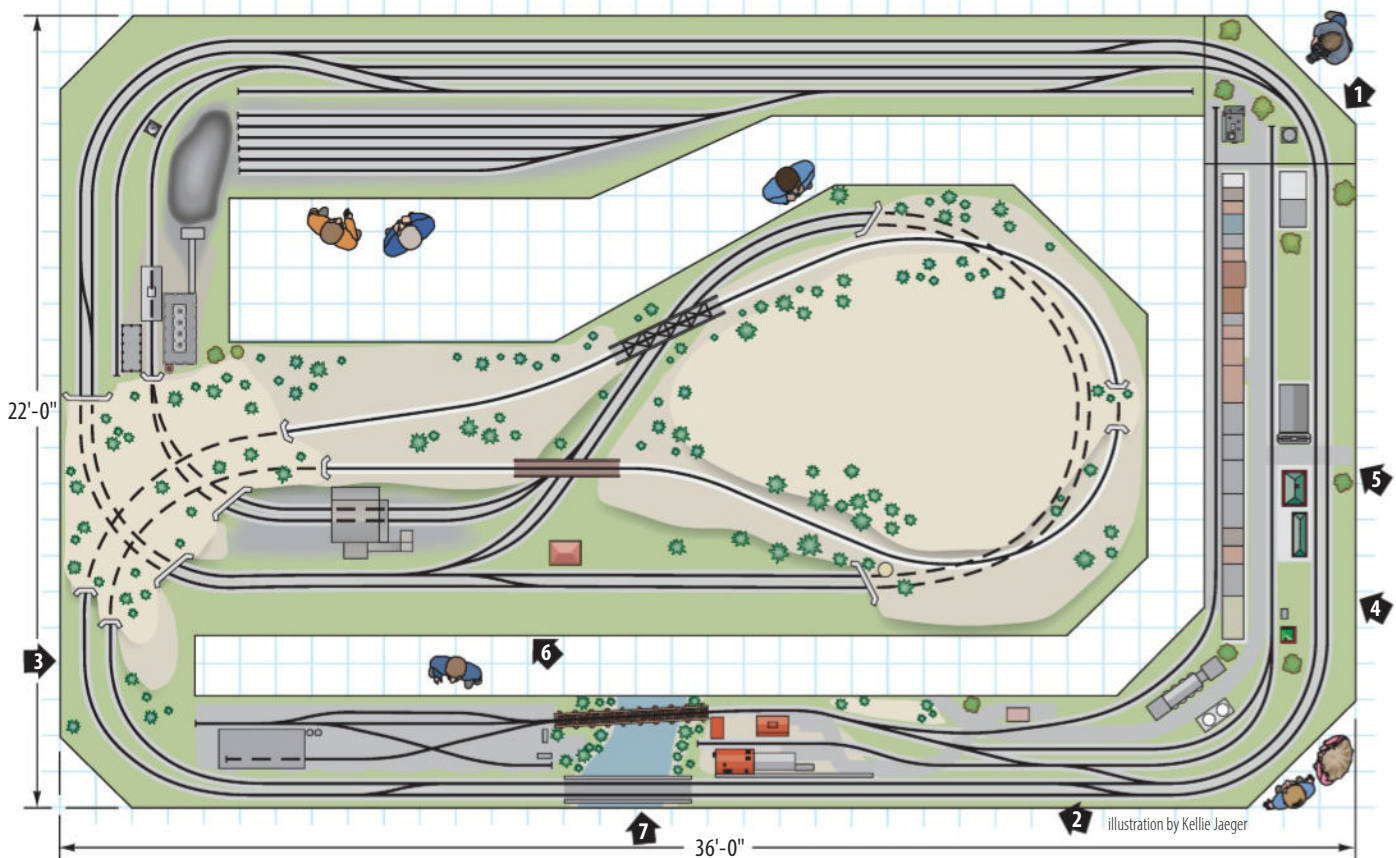
How to achieve that lofty aim challenged Clem. Assembling a roster of detailed models of NYC locomotives was only the first step. He next wanted to be certain the sounds they made reproduced what different engines on that railroad had made. Nothing generic or historically inaccurate would suffice for Clem, not after he had studied the Mohawks and Niagaras once owned by the Central.

Additional steps included upgrading the various locomotives with superb details, in particular scale knuckle couplers. Clem accepted the unavoidable fact that his engines would run over three-rail straights and curves; otherwise, they should approach scale realism in every aspect. He felt the same about the different pieces of rolling stock, the majority of which came from Atlas O and Weaver.

Something else Clem decided would improve the look and operation of his O gauge empire was removing the traction



3 Clem has a special place in his heart – and his layout – for the New York Central. Nothing beats letting one of his replicas of a steamer (here, an MTH Premier line 4-6-4 Hudson) run at full throttle with a long string of passenger cars behind.



Find more plans online in the Trains.com Track Plan Database.

Cities, rail yards, and a double-track main line exceeding 300 feet in length distinguish the O gauge railroad Clem built. The numbered arrows correspond to the numbers in each of the captioned photos taken by his friend Charles Stoia for this exclusive article.

tires on his diesel motive power. He also chose to exchange the wheels on different plastic freight cars for Delrin types, so they would run smoother and more quietly. Heavier models, especially those fabricated out of die-cast metal, should be equipped with metal wheels.

The assortment of upgrades yielded an impressive group of current-production locomotives and cars capable of handling whatever task Clem assigned them. They would enable him to run longer trains than most other toy train operators dared to assemble. Again, realism was uppermost in his mind, and so he believed what he called “scale-length trains” were essential to enjoy his layout.

TRUE RAILROADING

Days spent fine-tuning the appearance and operation of different engines and cars served as yet a different sort of foundation. Just as Clem took excellent care of his trucks to ensure they performed as consistently and dependably as possible, so too had he made sure his trains were ready to

handle anything he or his friends from the Detroit 3 Railers club threw at them during operating sessions.

And what was it that Clem demanded of his trains and the layout? Only the very best! This veteran hobbyist wanted his model railroad to make it feasible for long freight and passenger trains to be operated as though they were the property of the New York Central, the Union Pacific, or Amtrak. A lofty goal!

Accordingly, Clem created a fascinating track plan. He had in mind a double-track main line stretching over more than 300 feet with appropriate sidings and industrial spurs. Then by dedicated and careful use of the controllers sold as components of the Digital Command System from MTH, anyone would be able to run a train on schedule without risking a collision or causing a derailment.

What Clem wished to do was operate his trains as though they were trucks on an Interstate Highway. Each one would be assigned a starting point at which raw materials or finished items were picked up

AT A GLANCE

Clem Krzczkowski's O gauge layout

Dimensions: 22 x 36 feet

Track: GarGraves flextrack (diameters range from 96 to 122 inches)

Switches: Ross Custom Switches with Caboose Industries and Tortoise machines

Motive power: Lionel, MTH

Rolling stock: Atlas, Golden Gate Depot, K-Line, Lionel, MTH, Weaver

Controls: Lionel No. 85226 180-watt PowerHouse “brick” (4) with MTH Digital Command System

Accessories: Z-Stuff for Trains

Structures: Atlas O, Korber, MTH, Woodland Scenics

Vehicles: Corgi, Ertl, Road Champs

Figures: Arttista, K-Line, MTH, Preiser



4 Don't assume Clem takes everything about his layout too seriously. He has fun with his railroad and its operations, like lettering a small diesel for "Clem's Switching Service." Note his attention to city details like the spotlight, barrels, and figures.



5 Early risers waiting for their first cup of coffee at the diner on a quiet Monday morning are about to be jolted awake. The engineer driving the New York Central steamer prepares to blast its whistle right before passing through the grade crossing.



6 The tender mated to the New York Central 4-8-4 Niagara steam engine is decked out with more wheels than one of the massive tractor-trailer rigs Clem once rolled across the Midwest. It definitely makes a glorious sight alongside the coal mine.



and then dispatched on a journey to deliver those goods by a certain time. The route would be ascertained in advance, and then as many as six trains sent off to their destinations.

Clem concedes that some visitors expect to relax when they stop by and just run trains. But he prefers to think of his layout as a miniature railroad system that should be operated in a focused manner to prevent shutdowns in service.

SCENIC NEEDS

Now to be honest, a layout developed to emphasize prototypical operation hardly requires scenery. Clem could have stopped after his track was in place and tested and everything was ready for his command control to work effectively.

Bare plywood, however, would not have satisfied Clem. All the areas of the U.S. and Canada he had observed through a



7 What a terrific picture Clem's friend Charles Stoia (also a member of the Detroit 3 Railers) snapped of an MTH Southern Pacific SD45T-2 at a handmade wood trestle. The tall evergreen trees add majesty and beauty to the area along the river.

window on a passenger car or from the windshield of a truck had left their mark. He looked forward to modeling rural landscapes and urban and industrial sites reminiscent of what he had glimpsed, including those studded with a range of commercial and railroad structures.

Landforms on the layout came together nicely, thanks to the large pieces of blue Styrofoam carved neatly with a hot-wire tool. When Clem looked at them from every angle and believed the contours and shapes were what he desired, he painted them and then sprinkled on sand and gravel. In specified areas he opted for ground foam, bushes, and trees from the Scenic Express product line.

Typically, Clem created the scenic effects in his garage rather than in place on the layout. As soon as he was pleased

with how they looked, he carried them to his train room and installed them where intended. The mountains ended up being highlights, because of their tunnels, towering evergreens, and waterfalls.

For villages, Clem purchased houses, factories, and stations from Atlas O, Korber, MTH, and Woodland Scenics. He might weather them slightly or add a detail or light. Otherwise, about all he did to modify these commercial buildings before arranging them where he wished was to remove their bases so he could nestle them along the sidewalks and streets. He surrounded them with autos, figures, and trucks.

LET'S ALL ROLL

What do you think? Are you ready to roll with Clem and revamp your layout with a

vast double-track right-of-way over which your dispatcher sends long freight trains loaded with contemporary auto carriers and stack cars? Or do his impressive Amtrak long-distance passenger trains catch your fancy?

Regardless of the extent to which modelers strive to assimilate the lessons taught by Clem's impressive display, they ought to emulate what he has done for the foundation. Spend time and resources on the benchwork, track and turnouts, and wiring. Research what happens on full-size railroads, along their main lines and sidings, and in their yards, compact and sprawling. Most of all, figure out how you can enjoy this hobby in the most fulfilling ways and share your railroad with friends and newcomers. That's the best way to drive your life away. **CTT**



Discovering an uncommon Lionel boxcar in a common set

MY GREATEST FIND IS A LIONEL NO. 6464 CAR

STORY BY DAVID BRUNETTE

It was a tossup on who enjoyed Christmas of 1959 more, me or my father. Without me knowing it, he had built a fully operational layout in our basement for my first Lionel set. Looking back, it was easy for Dad to keep the layout construction a secret, since I was just four years old at the time and could not reach the light switch to go downstairs!

The Lionel set my father picked out was a terrific one loaded with what's known as "play value." The No. 1621WS outfit included Nos. 2037 Steam Locomotive and Whistle Tender, 6825 Flatcar with Arch Trestle Bridge, 6519 Allis Chalmers Flatcar, 6062 Gondola with Three Cable Reels, and 6017 Southern Pacific-type caboose.

There also was a No. 6464-825 Alaska RR boxcar. However, the Lionel catalog, I realized later, showed the 6464-475 Boston & Maine boxcar! Why the difference?

TRYING TO FIND OUT

By 1974, my interest in toy trains from the postwar era was growing and I wanted to

learn more about my first set. I wasn't sure what it was: Specifically, I needed to find out when it was released, what its number was, and which models were packed in it.

My starting point was the acquisition of a Lionel consumer catalog for 1961 at legendary French's Lionel Train House near Seattle. The catalog showed an O-27 set led by a 2037 steamer. However, the rolling stock included differed from what I had. Also, there was no 6464 boxcar in that outfit. So I knew it wasn't mine.

Years passed, and I kept learning about Lionel trains, especially the 6464 boxcars. In the February 1991 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*, postwar expert Joe Algozzini wrote

Wayne picked up many Lionel treasures from the postwar era by shopping at Madison Hardware Co. in New York City and becoming acquainted with Lou Shur, who owned the legendary store. Among the best was a No. 2341 Jersey Central Train Master road diesel.



My Madison Hardware memories

VISITS IN THE 1970S AND '80S BUILT A GREAT COLLECTION

STORY BY WAYNE H. WESTERVELT

After many years away from the toy train hobby after my childhood, I returned to the hobby as an adult in October of 1970. I discovered some tattered old Lionel catalogs and eagerly opened them to revive memories of trains I had owned and those I had wanted.

I soon was visiting hobby shops in my native New Jersey and perused ads for trains in *Model Railroader* magazine. There, I learned all about Madison Hardware Co. in New York City and decided to make a visit with my girlfriend before the end of the year.

FIRST TREASURES

It was a bitter cold morning in early December 1970. I had hardly slept the night before in anticipation of my first visit to Madison Hardware. An hour on a bus from northern New Jersey followed by a 15-minute subway ride and a brisk walk down 23rd street, and my girlfriend and I were actually standing in front of Madison Hardware!

We stood outside, just looking in the window and pointing out various Lionel trains. A No. 6250 Seaboard switcher (an item on my want list) was pulling freight cars around a loop of track. With great excitement and high expectation, we stepped inside.

I couldn't decide where to look first. We were looking in a small display case on our left, when a man near the center of the store asked how he could help us. We received a displeased look when I said we wanted to look around. I'm sure he thought we were just two curious young people who had wandered in to see what the store was all about.

As we made our way to the rear of the store, I gazed from side to side and counter to ceiling at seemingly never-ending stacks of orange-and-blue boxes interspersed with tan corrugated boxes and brown paper wrappings. While I tried to decide what to buy, Carl, as we learned

was his name, was engaging my girlfriend in conversation.

Finally ready to make a purchase, I asked the man at the rear counter (Carl was now busy with another customer) if he had the following items: Nos. 3494-550 Monon Operating Boxcar, 6517-75 Erie Bay Window Caboose, and 6250 Seaboard switcher. He said each was in stock, and I'll never forget the prices he quoted: \$34.95, \$29.95, and \$99.95, respectively. I recall thinking the 6250 price seemed high, but so what?

When I told him that I wanted them, he opened a door behind the counter, called out to a worker (named Mario, I believe), and told him what to fetch from the inventory. My trains arrived in less than 10 minutes. When I asked to inspect the items, the man said, "They are all new."

He opened the boxes, removed each

As we made our way to the rear of the store, I gazed from side to side and counter to ceiling at seemingly never-ending stacks of orange-and-blue boxes interspersed with tan corrugated boxes and brown paper wrappings.

train and waited while I checked each item. As soon as I finished my inspection, he carefully placed each train back in its box and called to Carl, who took the trains to a small counter for packing.

After wrapping each train in brown paper, Carl placed the three items in a box, wrapped the box in brown paper, secured it with twine, and looped the twine through a carrying handle. All this time, Carl was talking to the two of us and making light-hearted wisecracks. I heard another customer say, “Hi, Lou” to the man behind the rear counter.

BACK FOR MORE

My next visit was three weeks later, on December 26, 1970. The store was empty and I had an opportunity to chat with Lou and Carl. Carl asked why I didn't bring my girlfriend. I purchased a No. 614 Alaska NW2 switcher with money I received for Christmas. When I said “goodbye,” Carl told me to bring my girlfriend next time.

I made many more visits to Madison Hardware (sometimes every few months) over the following years, so I knew how to approach Lou Shur (the true owner) and his brother, Carl Shaw. They always recognized me, but most times did not remember my name.

It was obvious that Carl liked women. My girlfriend usually accompanied me on my trips to Madison Hardware, and Carl would always start a conversation with her. In fact, whenever she came with me he would let me purchase almost any item that I asked for.

Other people weren't as lucky, and it sometimes seemed that Lou and especially Carl could not care less if they sold anything. If Carl didn't feel like climbing the ladder to get something from the upper shelves, he wouldn't sell it. I even saw customers told to leave the store after they

had complained about prices or couldn't decide what to buy.

“NOT FOR YOU”

It is widely known that Madison Hardware sold “Lionel” items that actually were manufactured or decorated outside the Lionel factory. These items were often sold as “original” Lionel. After Lou got to know me as a regular customer, whenever I asked about something he knew was not factory original, he would say, “That's not for you.”

The first time this happened was in the very early 1970s, when I asked Carl about a No. 2341 Jersey Central Train Master body shell wrapped in brown paper with “2341” written on the end. He climbed a ladder and retrieved it from an upper shelf for me.

Lou told Carl to bring it to him. Then he opened the wrapping on one end, looked at a portion of the shell and said, “This one's not for you.” Puzzled, I asked, “Why not?” Lou winked and responded, “I've got another one for you.” He spoke to an employee, who returned 15 minutes later and handed Lou another 2341 shell wrapped in paper.

Lou quickly looked the shell over and then handed it to me and gave me a price. I never questioned any prices Lou or Carl asked for the trains I purchased. There were no issues with the shell except one end had a hardly noticeable crack around the screw hole.

I bought the shell, but I wondered why Lou would not sell me the first one. Many years later, when *Classic Toy Trains* had an article about distinguishing original Train Master shells from repaints, I checked my shell and found it had all the characteristics of an original. I could only assume the 2341 shell I had asked Carl to retrieve was a repaint.



MORE MADISON HARDWARE

Enjoy learning about the history of Madison Hardware, as well as more stories sharing additional memories, in two downloadable PDF packages for sale at shop.trains.com



CLOSING TIME

During the final months of Madison Hardware's operation in New York City, I went there almost every day during my lunch hour. If Lou and Carl had not remembered me from the visits through many years, they would have told me not to come in so often.

Employees were digging out all kinds of things. Trains and parts were all over the counters, and boxes of parts were on the floor. One guy found things I wanted and put them aside for me. When he saw me come in he would place them on existing piles, so I could bring them over to Lou or Carl for their prices.

One day I spotted a brand-new No. 2340 GG1 body shell painted Tuscan Red. Carl didn't want to sell it, but Lou intervened and gave me what I knew was a low price — reduced from before, because Madison was about to close and soon move to Detroit.

I really miss Madison. Walking down 23rd Street with high anticipation, chats with Lou and Carl, leaving with great Lionel trains wrapped in brown paper. I consider myself fortunate to have experienced the world's greatest Lionel train store.

As for the girl who accompanied me on many of those visits — I've been fortunate there as well, because we married and still revisit our Madison memories. **CTT**

After Wayne and his soon-to-be wife first visited Madison Hardware Co. in the early 1970s, he brought home a Lionel No. 6250 Seaboard NW2 diesel switcher, which was high on his want list.



Rethink, refresh, revive older passenger cars

Pinstripe tape and paint markers pep up a forgotten fleet

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KENT JOHNSON

Every day in North America, inter-city passenger railroad operations rely on stainless-steel cars that range from 30 to 70 years old! While this impressive longevity is often accredited to their original design and construction, don't discount the skillful, life-sustaining maintenance these aging cars received through the years. During longer maintenance windows, some cars are even treated to minor functional improvements and cosmetic updates that help them appear much younger than their age.

Inspired by these prototype practices, I decided to modernize my own fleet of older (circa 2000), even slightly damaged MTH Electric Trains O gauge streamlined cars – all on a tight budget. Even though I had only a weekend to collect my thoughts, tools, and supplies, transforming streamlined passenger cars, like those shown in **Photos 1 and 2**, was surprisingly easy and yielded realistic results.

PINSTripES, PAINT PENS, & PICK OF DETAILS

For many toy train enthusiasts, the last thing they'd ever want to do is alter the appearance and diminish the value of any "collectible" item. If you recall my previous well-worn Weekend Workshop efforts, you'll know I'm definitely not one of those folks!

That said, I specifically wanted to stick with a cost-conscious, resource-restrictive approach. If it wasn't a tool or supply I already had at home or couldn't pick up at a nearby store, it wouldn't be included in this effort. So as I rooted through my menagerie of "useful stuff," I discovered spools of colorful electrical, pinstriping, and chart tape in various widths (**Photo 3**). These strips of tape could mask over factory-painted stripes ... and be removed to restore the model to its original appearance!

Along with the tape, I found an assortment of enamel paint pens and permanent markers (**Photo 4**). Using these would certainly impact the valuation of the cars, but I still wanted to consider plans for thoroughly renovating at least one car. For any option, I also knew I had a significant stash of modern-era water-slide decals that would be useful (and easily removable) in updating my passenger fleet.

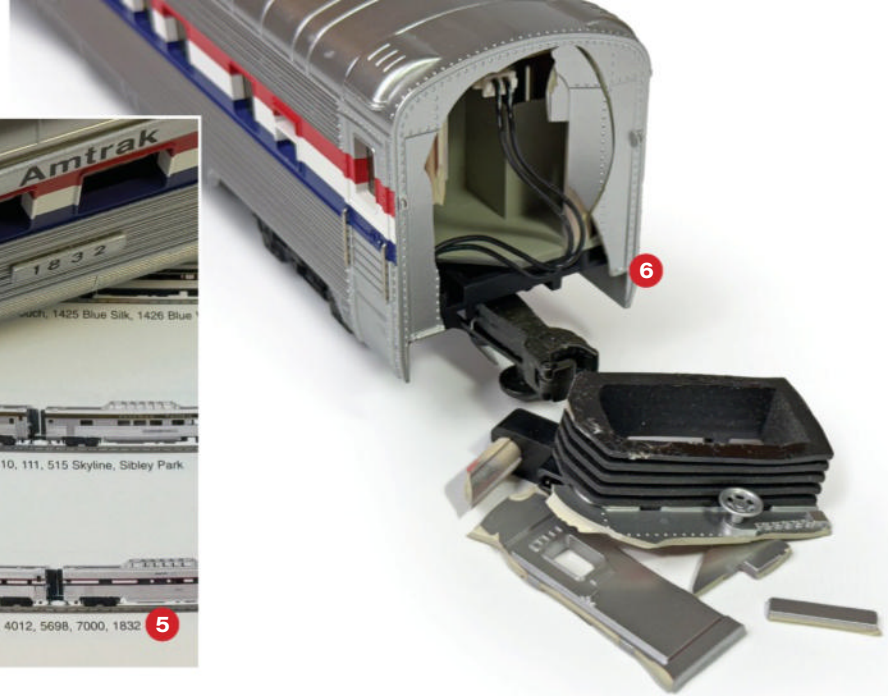




BREAK CHECK

Having recently traveled aboard VIA Rail Canada’s renovated “Corridor” (Quebec City to Windsor) passenger cars, I couldn’t resist the opportunity to update the early Amtrak scheme applied to my MTH Premier Line No. 20-6548, ribbed-sided ABS plastic, 70-foot streamliners (**Photo 5**). But first, I had to address some existing damage.

As they age, ABS plastic bodies and certain die-cast metal parts (couplers, trucks, wheelsets, and so forth) often become brittle, crack, or even break off. That’s a significant reason why



my set remained unused. With one carbody end already in shambles, I worried other cars might suffer the same fate (**Photo 6**).

Ultimately, I resolved to first disassemble each car by removing all screws securing the frame to the body. If the car remained intact through that process, I would have greater confidence it could withstand further handling. With the frame removed, I also detached the lighting harness, molded-plastic seat insert, and all the clear window glazing from the carbody, making it easier to tackle interior restorations. But that’s a subject for another Weekend Workshop effort. Now it’s time to roll the tape!

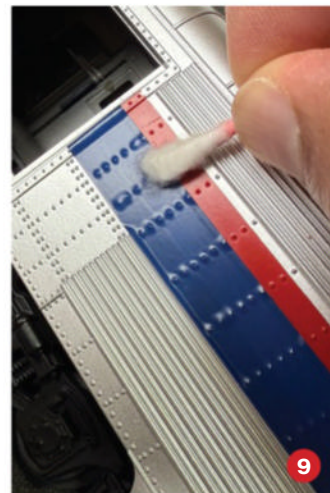
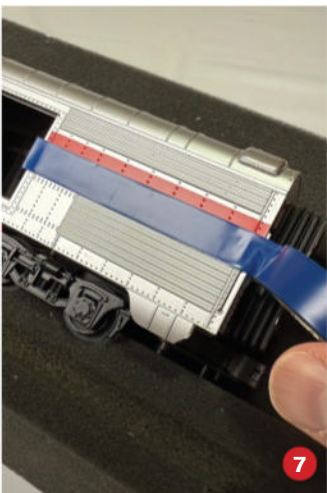
SIMPLE STRIPES TO START

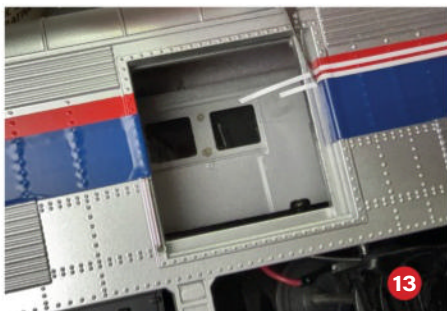
With most first-time efforts, I start with simple techniques. The baggage car would be the first in the MTH set to receive an updated scheme. Transforming this older Amtrak Phase III (red, white, and blue stripes of equal width) relic into a contemporary Phase VI (wide blue stripe with narrow red and white stripes) reserve, Heritage Fleet car would require only a couple feet of blue electrical tape and white pinstriping.

First I placed the baggage car in a foam cradle, leaving the entire length of one side accessible. I intentionally selected a roll

of blue electrical tape that was just wide enough to cover the original blue and white stripes. After rolling out an approximate length, I applied the segment between the car end and door opening, leaving excess tape on both ends (**Photo 7**).

Vinyl electrical tape is quite pliable, so I used progressively narrower tools to burnish the entire length of this segment before trimming any away. Rubbing my thumb, then a cotton swab, and finally the tip of a ballpoint pen (closed) over the tape, helped flatten and affix the segment over rivets, fluting, and other carbody details (**Photos 8, 9, and 10**).





I repeated this sequence to cover the remaining blue and white striping on both sides of the car (**Photo 11**).

In the same manner and process, I then applied two, equally spaced rows of thin white pinstriping along the red stripe (**Photos 12 and 13**). Because of the narrow width of pinstriping, the minimal amount of factory-applied adhesive isn't always enough to secure the tape when it is wrapped around edges or protruding parts. Using a toothpick or microbrush to add a dab of CA (cyanoacrylate adhesive) at the ends really helped keep these tiny stripes in place after trimming them to fit (**Photo 14**).

To complete the modernization process, I elected to pry off the glued-on "Amtrak" placard and apply the appropriate (Phase VI "wave") HO scale water-slide decals on the blue tape.

LEAVE IT ALL ON THE LINE

After reviewing the results of my restored Amtrak baggage car, I focused on crafting the VIA Rail Canada cars that initially inspired this effort. The stakes would be a bit greater when working with my newer and more valuable MTH Premier Line No. 20-66138, VIA Rail 70-foot Sleeper and Diner streamliner set.

As it turns out, VIA Rail's refurbished streamlined 1:1 scale cars were given a single yellow stripe along both sides of the carbody. More than decoration, this stripe gave crews a quick visual indication that the car had been reworked for connection to contemporary head-end power (HEP). To replicate this prototypical update, I only needed to add a yellow pinstripe (Pactra No. TT26) to my O scale cars! Even better, I could easily remove the tape, should I later want to restore the set to original condition for resale (**Photos 15 and 16**).



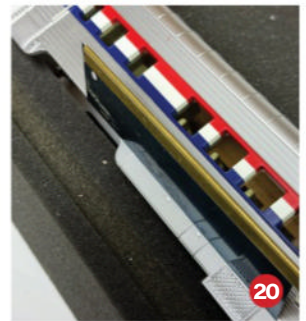
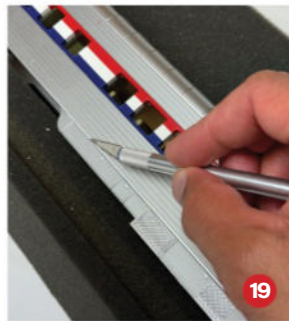
I could easily remove the tape, should I later want to restore the set to original condition for resale.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES, PLUS PAINT AND PINSTRIPES

Returning to my less-expensive MTH No. 20-6548 passenger set (**Photos 17 and 21**), I now had more courage to attempt other techniques for modeling refurbished VIA Rail cars. When reworked, older passenger cars are often stripped of vintage, stylistic features that impede quick maintenance. The skirting along the underside of passenger cars is one such example, so I decided to remove these from my MTH cars.

Because the ABS plastic was already brittle, it was also a bit of a practical, preventative measure to remove some parts before they broke off a finished model! The easiest way to accomplish this was by using a hobby knife to score a groove along the top edge of the skirting and then deepen the groove using a fine-tooth razor saw (**Photos 19 and 20**). When ABS plastic is brittle, it isn't necessary to cut through the entire groove before attempting to snap off the skirting.

To convert the Amtrak red, white, and blue stripes to resemble a reworked VIA Rail scheme, I considered using brown, blue, or teal electrical tape. While I could have found an appropriate shade, I realized that applying the tape across window openings would require more cutting and trimming than I wanted to tackle for this weekend project. That's when I opted to use enamel paint pens and permanent markers to cover the stripes with a suitable solid color (**Photo 23**).



18

To color the observation, I started with a Floquil No. 70 Roof Brown (discontinued) marker I had on hand. The earth-tone color was a reasonable match for this car as well as the VIA Rail Business Class coach I'd model too (Photos 18 and 22).

The VIA Rail Standard Class coach (not pictured) I modeled required a blue or teal marker. I used Elmer's Painter No. WA7335 Blue (available from Walmart),

but No. WA7380 Turquoise would have worked well too.

After allowing the paint to dry overnight, I finished all three cars by adding yellow electrical tape or pinstriping where appropriate, including the thinnest of safety striping under emergency-exit windows. From my stash, various HO scale VIA Rail decal sets (Microscale Nos. 87-1359 and 87-1153) proved to be all I

needed to apply the essential branding. Finally I used a black permanent marker to outline window gaskets and other details, before spraying a light coat of clear, semi-gloss lacquer over the entire carbody. I considered adding a full complement of interior details (seated figures, carpeted floors, stored luggage, and more), but that would have to wait for yet another Weekend Workshop! **CTP**



23



21



22



CODY GRIVNO PHOTO

Behind the scenes with MTH Electric Trains

Rich Foster and Bradley Deleon discuss the company's new chapter

BY LUCAS IVERSON AND RENE SCHWEITZER

Back in 2020, MTH Electric Trains President Mike Wolf announced his May 2021 retirement and the subsequent closure of the company after 40 years in business. It's now 2026, and MTH remains alive and well, continuing to make products for the model railroad and toy train industry at a more modest pace in O, Standard, and No. 1 Gauge scales — both the HO and S scale tooling were sold to ScaleTrains in 2021

Rich Foster, Vice President of Sales, and Bradley Deleon, a member of MTH's staff,

joined *Classic Toy Trains* Editor Rene Schweitzer and *Trains.com* Writer Lucas Iverson to chat about the firm's new chapter.

CTT: What were the factors in deciding to keep MTH operating and producing model/toy train products?

RICH: [Mike Wolf's initial retirement] was obviously within the early days of COVID-19, which left a lot of uncertainty about whether any business could survive. So, we had some inquiries from people he

was looking to sell the whole business to, if possible.

We didn't have a whole lot of tooling in HO or S scale, so that got [sold] fairly quickly because the total dollars required were fairly low. But we probably had more O gauge tooling than the rest of the market combined, so everybody was unsure about making that kind of commitment, dollar-wise. As it turned out, we sold some of that to Atlas and Lionel.

Meanwhile, I'd been working on a plan in case somebody did buy the business, as

FUN FACTS

First MTH product review in CTT:

GE 8-40C diesel locomotive, Nov. 1993

First MTH cover mention: Alco locomotives, Nov. 1994

First MTH engine as a cover photograph: Conrail SD60, March 1998

I was hoping to keep [my] job. That led toward me working on a new business plan. I showed it to Mike, as it basically lowered the overhead with potentially less headaches. He decided he was willing to go forward with the plan, and that's why we kept going.

CTT: Can you explain how the business changed to what it is now?

RICH: What we basically decided to do was reduce the staff and the overhead fairly significantly. The good news was we were able to keep a lot of our more experienced people as contractors. They wanted to continue working on what they knew how to do.

CTT: Were there significant challenges during the transition?

RICH: There were challenges because as soon as you get down to where you've got fewer employees, people need to do things that they weren't used to doing in the past. But it's been fine overall. It allows us to wear some hats that we might not have worn five years ago.

CTT: In the past year, MTH started releasing Tinsplate Traditions and Rail-King 1 Gauge products again. What does the future hold for those lines?

RICH: I would think with either of them, but particularly Tinsplate, we're going to have to see because we're just about to deliver some of the first items from five-plus years ago. Depending upon the responses and popularity, that will drive what we do moving forward, obviously.

The 1 Gauge products have so far been pretty good. We've invested in new tooling for the SD70ACe and ES44AC diesels, which weren't cheap. So we plan on staying committed to that line.

Tinsplate is going to somewhat depend on how well the monorail and No. 400E steam locomotive do. We're even about to



MTH released several versions of an O gauge Detroit Monorail set in 2024-25 under the Tinsplate Traditions line. This blue-and-cream model was available in a traditional version (No. 20-3052-0) and a version with Proto-Sound 3.0 (No. 20-3052-1).



MTH collaborates with hobby shops, toy train clubs, retailers, and other groups to produce a variety of custom-run O gauge products. Top: The Red Gold 3-Bay cylindrical hopper (No. 20-96882) was a custom-run for Mr. Muffin's Trains. Above: The Long Island RR operating boxcar with signal man (No. 30-71262) was a custom-run for Trainworld.

promote some passenger cars to go behind the latter. Obviously, Mike loves Tinplate. That was his passion and what started the business. So I'm sure it wouldn't take a lot of coaxing to get him to stick behind it.

CTT: What led to the partnership with Atlas and the current collaboration with the manufacturer?

RICH: A lot of it stems from when they bought some of our tooling. Mike offered to Atlas the service of putting MTH's electronics into the tooling that was bought. Right there, you have a hybrid-type working relationship.

There are things that they want to do or we want to do, because the other company owns a particular tooling or whatnot. But it's more of a partnership in general, and has to make sense for both companies to do a certain project. You will likely see more of something like that from time to time in the future.

CTT: What's been the feedback from customers so far about the collaboration?

RICH: I think it's good. It can get a little confusing, and you have to do some explaining at times, especially to the dealers. But overall, I think they're happy.

CTT: Let's say a club or dealer reaches out to you, wanting to make a custom-run product. Can you explain the process of how this comes together?

RICH: When we promote a particular item, we start getting inquiries. We tend to get as much information on the front end for what they want, and then tell them the basic quantities. We offer to do some things that I think help make the whole request more palatable, such as multiple car numbers on a particular road name. Certain customers will want multiple cars with unique car numbers.

Other times, we'll get inquiries about a product we have not promoted yet. We'll have dealers or clubs ask us, "When you run item x, y, and z again, can we jump in on a custom run of it?" Often, that drives what we're going to be promoting in the near future.

It kind of goes both ways. But overall, it's the dealers or clubs that get with us, provide images that they want, and we give them the opportunity to pick the car

numbers. They have a chance to tweak the artwork. Once they approve it, the product goes into the mix of being built and delivered to them as soon as we can get it done.

BRADLEY: On top of that, it doesn't just have to be a dealer or model railroad club. We also work with enrichment clubs, societies, and other smaller clubs. We even have a bakery in Pennsylvania that requests custom runs. So we're open to inquiries on those.

CTT: What do you wish our readers knew about MTH?

RICH: I think we have a reputation for offering high-quality products at an affordable price, as best we can in this industry. We do keep our overall overhead lower. It costs a lot of money to print those catalogs and mail them two times a year. But the way technology is now, it allows us to do weekly newsletters instead.

CTT: What does the future hold for MTH?

RICH: We're going to keep building trains. We're going to keep making stuff. Having Bradley on board has breathed new life into this place. He's very good with the customers, really tries to help people, and is learning every day on the job. Because this is a strange industry to jump into if you haven't been involved in it, there are

nuances which will take a lot to figure out. But he's doing great.

We have a reputation for offering high-quality products at an affordable price, as best we can in this industry.

BRADLEY: I've noticed that the younger generation is way more into prototypical scale stuff from talking to them. So, we've worked with a lot of them, and I would go onto Discord chats and monitor [the discussion] in the background. They don't know that it's me, but I just try to absorb all the information I can. I also try to go

to other outlets like Facebook and forums to soak up all I can.

CTT: Any possibility for growth?

RICH: Yes. Since Bradley's been on board, we have developed new tooling for motive power and rolling stock that we're going to announce soon. Right there, once you start spending that kind of money and invest in tooling, you had better put it to good use. Now that I've got somebody younger and smarter than I am, he can take over and run with it. **CTT**

HOW TO REACH MTH

7393 Washington Blvd., Ste. 101,
Elkridge, MD 21075
mthtrains.com
410-381-2580

Watch the extended video of this interview with MTH on [Trains.com/Video](https://www.trains.com/Video)



Atlas engines, like this C44-9W from the Premier line, include MTH's Proto-Sound 3.0 and Bluetooth, allowing you to run the engine conventionally or using the MTH app. Cody Grivno photo

Upgrade a modern Lionel Milk Car with Platform

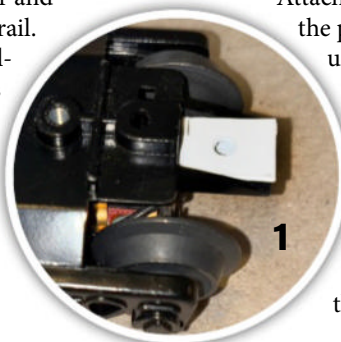


Install different pickup rollers for reliable operation

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRAD ADAMS

In 2020, I purchased Lionel's No. 2028310 Milk Car With Platform. Unfortunately, I was never happy with this car's operation. It kept short-circuiting on my O gauge layout, especially when going through switches, because the pickup rollers would wander and strike the outside (ground) rail.

I replaced the pickup rollers with better ones, such as the ones Lionel uses on its boxcars equipped with sound. The fix is simple and straightforward, so I recommend you try it if your milk car is having the same issues.



Take a scrap piece of 0.040"-thick white styrene and cut two pieces, each 0.40" wide and 0.60" long, using a pair of scissors. Stack the pieces to make a "sandwich." You'll need two sets of them – one for each truck assembly (**Photo 1**).

Attach the styrene sandwich to the pickup roller protrusions using CA. After the glue has dried, tap a 6-32 hole through both pieces of styrene. Also tap the new pickup rollers (Lionel No. CS-680510507-P) for a 6-32 hole. Install a 6-32 screw ($\frac{1}{8}$ " long) into the newly tapped assembly.

should look like **Photo 2**. Then I painted the styrene black to blend it into the frame, but you can use black styrene instead of white if you can get it.

Now all you have to do is operate your car! I've been running my milk car with its new rollers through switches for a while, both forward and backward facing, and the car has performed flawlessly.

BONUS TIP: The milkman's aim when tossing the milk cans really improves if the platform is set up correctly. There are two sets of notches, one higher than the other. If you have FasTrack, use the higher set of notches in the platform. **CTI**

REMOVE AND REPLACE

First, remove the old rollers using cyanoacrylate adhesive (known as CA cement or super glue) debonder (available at any hobby shop). Next, cut the wires from the inner assembly to the rollers (hot), base plate (ground), and the two pickup shoes. Technically, you could cut only the wires to the two pickup shoes and leave the hot and ground wires in place. However, I found it helpful to remove the truck assemblies from the car.



FINISHING STEPS

I reattached the cut wires on my car using a soldering iron. You could use small plastic wire connectors instead. The wires connect the 4-wire JST connector on the inner assembly of the milk car. The first wire on the JST harness is the hot; the second is the ground. Finally, the third and fourth wires go to the two pickup shoes on the trucks (**Photo 2**).

With everything assembled and rewired, the underside of your milk car

SUPPLY LIST

- CA debonder
- CA cement
- 0.040"-thick styrene scrap
- (2) Lionel No. CS-680510507-P pickup rollers (lionelsupport.com)
- 6-32 drill tap and drill bit
- (2) 6-32 screws, $\frac{1}{8}$ " long
- Scissors
- Soldering iron or small plastic wire connectors
- Black paint (optional)



Model Products Corp., the division of General Mills that was in charge of manufacturing Lionel Trains for General Mills in the early 1970s, first cataloged the No. 8030 Illinois Central GP9 road diesel in 1970. The earliest version (left) used postwar parts for the stanchions that held the shiny metal railing. By 1971, MPC had substituted thinner stanchions fabricated out of plastic (right).

diesel easier, and therefore MPC carried it over to all future releases of the Geeps.

The other noteworthy postwar remnant was the fuel tank, which can occasionally be seen sporting the original battery-operated horn instructions, despite the engine's lack of a horn. That feature would not be seen in an MPC engine until 1973. Even within the early production run, not all units have this leftover stamping, making versions with both components even harder to find.

COMPANION UNIT

While the 8030 was initially shown with a No. 8031 unpowered IC GP9 in the catalog for 1970, MPC didn't release an unpowered companion unit until 1972. The latter road diesel was assigned the product number 8254; the number 8031 had gone to a Canadian National GP7 road diesel that debuted in 1971.

The 8254 can be found only with the standardized plastic handrail stanchions. It won't match the early-production variation of its powered mate.

BOXES

The boxes used for the 8030 and 8254 IC GP9s reflect the development of production and marketing under MPC. The first boxes were thick white cardboard and had a clamshell design with a punch-out window. The earliest releases were simply stamped, with a sticker added as production went on. It boldly declared that the diesel "Pulls more than 25 cars" and showed how MPC aimed to make the item more attractive to consumers at the point of sale, listing features and adding graphics to the box, a trend that would be exploited on future offerings.

Later the powered unit and its companion were issued in the standard red box

that showed a veritable miniature catalog of offerings around its borders!

CONCLUSIONS

As with many of MPC's first offerings, the 8030 IC GP9 represented the commitment by General Mills to bring out exciting new and contemporary items. It demonstrated the real-life shift in railroading from cab units, such as the F3, to road switchers, such as the GP9. In fact, other than an Amtrak F3 released in 1974, the cataloged line would never again offer an F3 as a contemporary model.

That notable shift stuck with General Mills — GP9s were continuously released as some of the most deluxe, collector-grade models throughout the later era of production. Even today, the GP9 is offered by Lionel as a solid and reliable workhorse, just like the full-size Geeps still earning their keep on rails today. **CTT**



An unpowered companion unit joined Lionel's cataloged line in 1972, when the No. 8254 Illinois Central GP9 made its debut. It remained in the line for only that year.



How to upgrade trackwork

Use components from Ross and GarGraves for smooth operation and more realism

STORY AND PHOTOS BY STAN TRZONIEC

Aside from benchwork, the best foundation you can have for flawless operation on a layout is good trackwork. While track is available from Atlas, Lionel, Menards, and MTH, looking at other manufacturers, such as Ross Custom Switches and GarGraves Trackage, can really open up opportunities in design and layout realism.

For many years, I relied on Lionel O and O-27 tubular track with added hand-cut ties. Later, I spiced up my home layout with a combination of GarGraves switches powered with Pioneer switch machines with broad 36"-radius curves for high-speed operation using GarGraves' brand of flexible track.

Seven layouts later, I sold all my Lionel

track and started over with both Ross and GarGraves. I've never looked back, so if you are in doubt, I am here to show you the way.

TRACK SPECIFICATIONS

Ross offers 47 different kinds of switches for the semi-scale operator. The list is much too long to include with this article, but switches are available in both straight (Nos. 4, 5, 6, and so forth) and curved Lionel switches.

Ross also makes smooth-running, high-speed curved switches, along with wyes; crossings in 30, 45, 60, and 90 degrees; double crossovers; a slip switch; ladder tracks; and yard tracks up to 57" in

GarGraves track adds an extra touch of realism to the author's O gauge layout, as shown in this view of the east entrance of the modern diesel facility.

length for eight tracks. Sectional track comes in straight and curves from O-31 up to O-128 diameter, with everything mounted on wood ties. Prewired, manual, or switch-machine switches are available, as are paper switch templates from the Ross website to help with placement before ordering.

GarGraves Trackage offers less variety in switches, but enough in 31" to 100" plus a wye, crossings, gantry, uncoupling track sections, and trestle track complete with center guardrails. Their flexible 37"-long

track (with or without a black center rail) is great for tight places or areas where sectional track will not work. Track is also available from GarGraves with plastic ties and stainless-steel rails for outdoor use.

GETTING STARTED

Before you lay even one section of track, make sure your benchwork is perfect. This should include the framework, plywood base, and, if you use it, a top Homasote layer. Systematically, you level the foundation, attach the plywood, and then secure the Homasote with an extra screw or two. I emphasize screws because if you ever have to move, they make layout disassembly easier. Been there!

For trackwork, I suggest investing in a quality motor tool and a premium soldering gun (I prefer Weller). With the motor tool, make sure it includes a flexible shaft to allow the cutoff wheel to lay flat against the track for a straight cut. The body of the tool is sometimes too large, and you will find yourself cutting track at an angle.

You'll also want to purchase a pack of cutoff discs, some rubberized Cratex grinding wheels, and a roll of rosin-core solder for wire connections to the track. A pair of safety glasses should complete your tool kit.

INSTALLING THE TRACK

My choice of the Ross/GarGraves combination is simple. Aside from appearance, they connect with top-mounted rail pins for a more secure connection and mate together flawlessly. Because of the wood ties, you don't need an insulated rail section; instead, just cut a gap in the rail, solder your lead from your accessory for power, use the other wire as your ground to the outside rail, and you are done! [See the Summer 2025 issue of *Classic Toy Trains* for more on electricity. – Editor]

Assuming your track plan is completed, start adding track on the layout and install as you go. If you lay the track sections on the table, be sure to keep them level with each other as you join them. Doing so reduces any damage while allowing for a seamless mating.

Consider where you want to install gaps to isolate sections for electrical blocks, and install plastic joiners in the middle rail now, while marking the section with a bit of tape (as a reminder). It's better for the track to install the plastic insulators now, so you pull it apart less often. Do not secure anything yet, including the wiring, as that will come when you are happy with this temporary setup and everything is in place.

No doubt, you are going to come to a spot that needs cutting or fitting. You can use an inexpensive hobby razor saw or a motor tool. Mark the rail and then line up a tie under the mark for cutting, as this will help you keep a straight cut (see photo at right). Before I cut, I place a piece of tape at the spot even with the tie underneath. This helps keep a straight line for a perfect cut. Lay the head of the flexible shaft as close to the surface of the track as possible, and cut using a slow and even motion with the disc.

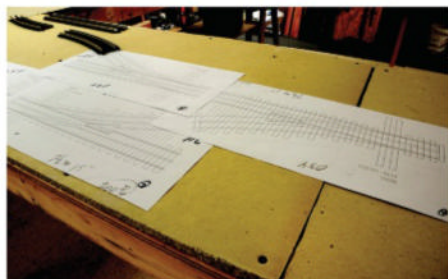
You may want to practice on a spare piece of track first. If you can't get the shaft close enough to the track for a straight cut, start past the line an inch or so and then attack it from the other side, as this allows you to lower the shaft even closer to the benchwork for a straighter cut.

Clean up the cut with a hobby file or the polishing disc. Then insert a 4D finishing nail slightly into the hole to open it up again for the opposing track pin.

Attaching a feeder to the black oxide center rail is always a challenge the first time, but it's easily accomplished with the aid of a Cratex rubber-polishing wheel, which is available in kit form with a variety of sizes. I use the fine texture with their smaller wheel so it fits into the track easily.



Before installing any track or switches on a layout, be sure your benchwork is perfect and level all around. Smooth trackwork depends on a good foundation.



Ross Custom Switches has downloadable templates on its website. You can lay out your switch positions in paper first and then order the correct model and right quantity.



For the best track appearance, the author recommends that you purchase premade curves from either company. They are smooth, mate perfectly, and look great.



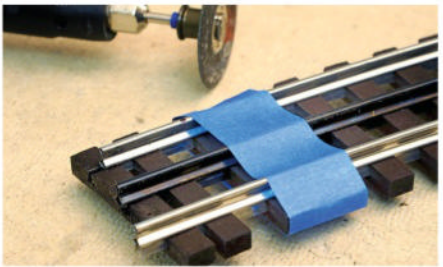
When working with track and installing plastic insulating pins, it is a good idea to mark each center rail for wiring later. Here, the author is cinching up each rail tightly for good electrical contact.



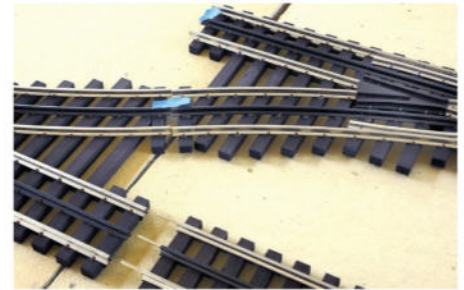
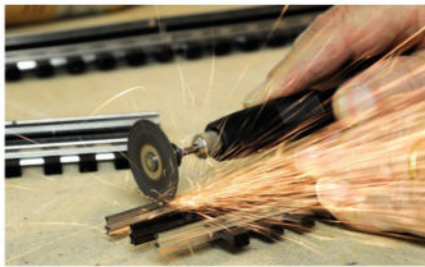
On his railroad, the author uses the middle rail on all his trackwork for signaling by gapping as shown here. Tape keeps the position of the gaps visible until everything has been wired and secured.

RESOURCES

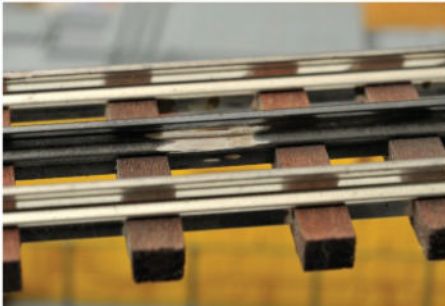
- **Caboose Industries**
cabooseind.com
- **Circuitron**
circuitron.com
- **GarGraves**
gargraves@gargraves.com
- **Ross Custom Switches**
rossswitches.com
- **Z Stuff for Trains**
zstuffexpress.com



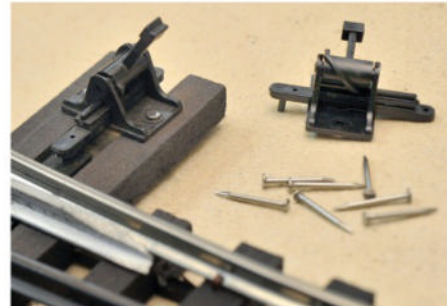
Before cutting track, mark it with a permanent marker as shown by the dot in front of the tape for a starting point. Move a tie forward to act as a guide for a straight cut. Keep the flexible shaft horizontal to ensure a straight cut and wear safety glasses.



Mating track sections is easy if you place each piece on the table and push them together. Note the insulating pin on the lower track ready to complete these sections.



Cleaning the oxide coating off the middle rail is easy with a motor tool and small rubber abrasive discs from Cratex. This area is ready to solder the wire to the track.



The author likes to use the Caboose Industries No. 208S O scale hand throws. Using #19 x 1/2" brads makes installation of these throws quite easy.



To complete your trackwork and to add more realism, the author strongly recommends applying ballast and adding white glue diluted with water as a binder.

Attach the wheel to a spindle and then polish away the black coating so it will take the solder. Run the wire up from under the track, turn it into an "L" shape, and push it against the rail with the heated gun while feeding a bit of solder. I hold it in place with stripwood until the solder has set. Later, I'll write over the solder with a black permanent marker so it blends in.

After the track is positioned with each section or switch tightened up against the next, there are various schools of thought on how to attach it, depending on the underlying surface. If you are using a raised roadbed on a plywood base, I recommend screwing the track down. I use only Homasote as the sound-deadening base, so I add #17 x 3/4" nails.

After using a small drill on each to keep the tie from splitting, I find this length will go into the Homasote about a half-inch without working loose later.

Should you ever have to disassemble the trackwork, a slight movement under the tie with a thin putty knife will allow the track to release from the base without breakage or damage.

FINISHING IDEAS

To make nice sweeping curves, I purchase GarGraves sectional track. Sure, you can

bend flextrack into any radius, but then you are strapped with finishing the ends even. The ready-made curves are perfect and mate with the track for a professional look without the kinks. Not to say I don't bend the flextrack to fit an industrial spur or an approach to my diesel house, but for mainline traffic I advise going with the prefabricated curves.

To move the points on the switch, you can use a Z-Stuff for Trains No. DZ-1000 Switch Machine or a Tortoise electric switch motor. For manual operation, I recommend a Caboose Industries No. 208S

hand throw. I prefer manual operation, as I like to follow the train and make industrial switching moves with my handheld controller. The Caboose Industries hand throw installs easily on either side of the switch with spikes or #19 x 1/2" nails.

Touch up the heads of the nails with a black marker on both the track and the switch stands. Add ballast, glue it in place (see photo above) to add that finished look, and you are ready to roll.

If you're considering upgrading your layout to the semi-scale side of realism, try using Ross and GarGraves products. **CTI**



Whether installed on the main line or within a yard, GarGraves track always makes your three-rail layout look better and more realistic.



Marx layout showcases decades of collecting

EXPLORE THIS COLORFUL AND ENTERTAINING DISPLAY

STORY AND PHOTOS BY WALT HITESHEW

1 Bursting out of a tunnel on Walt Hiteshew's O gauge 8½ x 17½-foot layout is the prewar Union Pacific streamliner from Louis Marx & Co. that steered him toward its great trains.

The worst toy train layout I ever saw was one I really liked! That tells you a bit about me.

The layout spotlighted here is the 8½ x 17½-foot U-shaped railroad that showcases the collection of Marx trains and accessories I've been accumulating for more than 40 years. In particular, it revives memories of two important Marx collectors and Christmas gardens.

Unlike the majority of Marx enthusiasts who cut their teeth on those wonderful trains and toys and never lost their enthusiasm for them, I spent my childhood

playing with Lionel locomotives and cars. My family set them up during the holiday season, putting together what folks in my native Baltimore call a "Christmas garden."

I remember our 4 x 8-foot displays adorned with Plasticville U.S.A. houses and accessories. We ran a prewar passenger set and a postwar freight train led by No. 2032 Erie Alco FA diesels. I loved it when we turned off the lights in the living room and watched as a searchlight car cast shadows on the walls. What a light show!

I was 16 years old in 1969, when I bought my first train at a yard sale. It was

a Marx Union Pacific streamliner in green and cream. It was the beginning of a lifetime of collecting, studying, writing about, and operating toy and scale model trains.

Things really took off again about 10 years later, after I had begun my career and married. Once more, constructing a Christmas garden was the driving force. My wife and I had bought our first home and wanted to make it feel right for the holidays. An O gauge display was the answer, and we had lots of fun.

That first layout measured 5 x 7 feet and had two Lionel trains plus my trusty Marx streamliner. Over the next few years, I built a new garden every Christmas. Then in 1984, I started on my first permanent layout. That 7 x 18-foot O gauge railroad had four levels of track on which my son and I could operate as many as five trains at once.



Walt and his wife understand that much of the pleasure we associate with toy trains involves sharing the hobby with others, in particular their children and grandchildren.

CHANGED ATTITUDE

By the late 1980s, I had three children and began going to local train shows, only to find the prices of postwar Lionel trains were skyrocketing. I took my older son to the shows, and he began showing interest in the little six-inch tinplate trains by Marx.

One day my son turned to me and offered some sage advice: “Dad, I think the reason you don’t like Marx trains is because you see trains as models of real trains rather than as toys. If you look at Marx as toys and not models I really think you’ll like them.”

I was blown away by the insight of an 8-year-old. I began

buying some Marx for him at each show, and soon I had fallen in love with the beautifully decorated engines and cars. That made sense because I was a professional artist and realized the lithography

used by Louis Marx & Co. on its trains and toys is definitely artwork.

Within a year I had sold the bulk of my Lionel trains and become a collector of Marx. I decided to do it right — meeting fellow Marx collectors, buying books about Marx trains, and looking under tables at shows to find the Marx treasures.

As far as layouts went, however, I was content with building Christmas gardens for my Marx trains. I had dismantled my permanent O gauge layout, but I had not yet replaced it with a one dedicated to my current interest — trains made by Marx.

GETTING TO WORK

For the past 15 years or so, I have devoted my imagination, energy, and time to the Marx layout featured here. I studied the area available to me and concluded that I had only a 13 x 23-foot space to work in. Then I got down to work on my U-shaped display, which stands 36 inches off the floor and rises another 12 inches.

I opted for open-grid benchwork that has inverted T-girders and cross-members standing on 2 x 4s veneered with oak. They support a platform made of ½-inch-thick sheets of plywood on the flat area.



2 A couple of tired hobos amble across the magnificent Carol Viaduct erected by Walt at a key spot on the railroad. The Baltimore & Ohio steam engine and tender combination on the point of a freight train consisting of boxcars represent Walt’s own “custom artwork.”



3 Toy train enthusiast Walt Hiteshow has devoted his adult years to collecting and displaying the marvelous electric trains and other kinds of playthings manufactured and marketed by Louis Marx & Co. during the decades before and after World War II.

I put down some ½-inch-thick foam insulation board. In addition, many sections of Menards three-rail tubular track were gently screwed through that material.

Personally, the look and reliability of old-fashioned tubular track appeals to me. Menards offers O gauge straights and curves whose diameters include 31, 36, and 42 inches. For the switches, I use vintage electric types produced by Marx. The reason is plain and simple: No other brand works as well with Marx locomotives, which are known for the wide flanges on their wheels.

Not that my motive power roster is limited to Marx. I own and run engines from prewar days made by American Flyer, Hafner, Henry Katz, Hoge, Lionel, and Marx. The prewar freight and passenger cars coupled to those locomotives are equally as eclectic.

Power for trains and accessories comes from three 150-watt Marx and two Lionel transformers all wired in parallel. Three of

the transformers handle nothing but the more than 125 lights! I chose vintage transformers because my layout aims to represent the 1934-42 era, and my goal was to stay within those time boundaries as much as possible.

BLOCKS AND HILLS

There are three loops of track: outside, inside, and mountain. The outside loop has a separate siding so two trains can run. Double-pole single-throw toggle switches energize blocks and Marx block signals. The inner loop has no switches or blocks.

The mountain loop is wired for two-train operation. There are three independent blocks: level, incline, and decline. The train at the end of a block stops to energize the train on the block ahead. The loop can also be operated with all blocks energized but only one train running constantly.

For building the mountain and hills, I relied on traditional hard-shell methods. I laid down wood formers spaced 12 inches

apart and secured plastic screening over them. I then covered the screening with plaster-infused gauze and spackling compound. Some spots were covered with crumpled aluminum foil to suggest a rocky surface. Elsewhere, I collected shale from my backyard and secured the rocks in place for a natural appearance.

I painted all the surfaces with commercial watercolors before finishing with a variety of ground covers from Woodland Scenics and lichen from Life-Like. I fabricated the trees from different dried flower components that I eventually painted to mimic life. They are the only plastics used in the layout other than walls, which I made of Styrofoam.

City roads were created by cutting the shape from ¼-inch-thick plywood and then raising the negative space with ¼-inch scraps to form curbs. I added street sewers and manholes (actually, copper pennies) before painting everything with primer and shaking on sawdust.

AT A GLANCE

Walt Hiteshew's 0 gauge layout

Dimensions: 8½ x 17½ feet

Track: Menards (diameters range from 31 to 42 inches)

Switches: Marx

Motive power: American Flyer, Hafner, Henry Katz, Hoge, Lionel, Marx

Rolling stock: American Flyer, Hafner, Henry Katz, Hoge, Lionel, Marx

Controls: Lionel, Marx transformers

Accessories: Lionel, Marx

Structures: Byron Molds, Chein, Hafner, Hornby, Kibri, Marx, Wyandotte

Vehicles: Barclay, Dinky, Hubley, London Toy, Marx, Sun Rubber, Tootsietoy, Wyandotte



Find more plans online in the Trains.com Track Plan Database.

Outside and inside loops of track, along with one traversing the mountainous region of Walt's layout, promise lots of action. The numbered arrows correspond to the numbers in each of the captioned photos he snapped for this exclusive article on his Marx display.

4 Seems as though Walt hired a hot-air balloon to lift him high above the village of Jacobton (named for another of his grandchildren) to snap this unforgettable view of the main thoroughfares filled with antique vehicles and the structures bordering the streets.



Once the sawdust had dried, I sanded it off and painted the streets gray. Crosswalks and parking spaces went on last, after I masked and carefully painted them.

MY FAVORITES

My initial response whenever anyone asks me about my favorite areas is to say that I like everything on the layout. Then I get to thinking and admit I am proudest of what I named the Carol Viaduct. It wasn't in the original plan, but while laying the track I saw the opportunity to add it. I realized from the get-go that structure would require a few weeks of labor. Yet the time and effort were worthwhile because of the beauty added.

The most challenging aspect about the viaduct was that it had to be curved to fit the space. That meant its two sides had to be different in size and the arches would also differ in size. Furthermore, the lighting was handmade and had to be positioned correctly before the walkways were built. Wiring went into channels under the walkways. Lots of work!

I also love the towns of Graceland and Brookevale, which I've named for my eldest granddaughters. They, like all of my grandchildren, are represented in some way on the layout, whether in a town, a farm, or an airport. The youngsters make it a point when visiting to check out their namesake on the railroad and ensure it looks its best.

Looking ahead to the near future, I plan to add interactive elements to the layout to make it even more interesting and entertaining for the grandkids and their friends. I have in mind a loading station for the candy train (a dump station already exists), circling airplanes, rotating blades on the windmill, a live steam power plant, and smoking chimneys.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES

There are many types of toy train layouts. Some builders care nothing about scenery and just want track to run trains. Some try to replicate life to a high degree. Some have in place every structure and accessory the owner has. All these approaches have value.

Nevertheless, I wanted something different. My goal was to create a convincing diorama with an interesting track plan, landscaped to a level approximating the realism of my toy trains and buildings. Too real, though, and the tinplate trains would look wrong.



5 Even hobbyists unfamiliar with what Louis Marx & Co. produced during the prewar and postwar eras will see beauty in the tinplated and lithographed buildings and accessories.

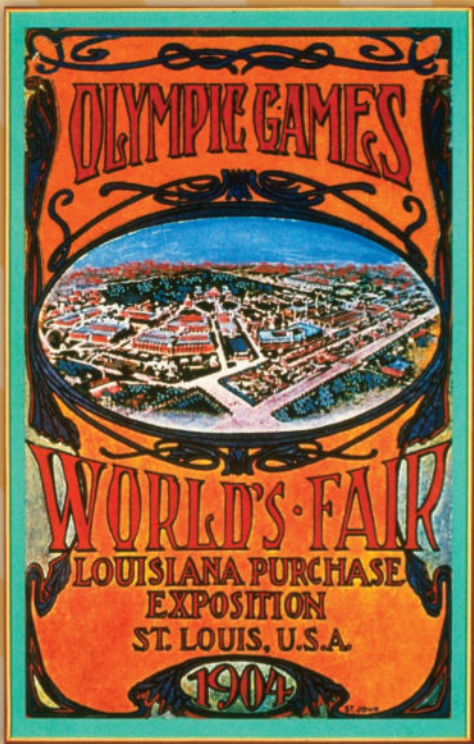


6 The engineer and fireman aboard the Canadian Pacific steamer wonder whether they should be inside Graceland Church instead of toiling on a Sunday morning in October.

I call this approach “scaled realism.” It relies heavily on incorporating vintage toy structures, even some not necessarily made for miniature train layouts, into an idyllic fantasy world that takes you back to the America of the 1930s and early 1940s, when life was simpler than it is today. My use of tin lithographed buildings as well as ceramic structures and details made by hand by my late mother-in-law Dorothy

Dragich to create a convincing cityscape is unusual, yet I believe I’ve managed to pull it off convincingly.

All in all, I’m happy with the results of what has taken a few years to complete and continues to please and inspire me. Above all, I hope my layout will encourage other hobbyists, regardless of the brand they prefer, to start work on their own layouts and build for the next generation. **CTI**



Lionel Trains meet me at the fair!

LIONEL'S PRESENCE AT THE ST. LOUIS
WORLD'S FAIR OF 1904

STORY BY ROBERT J. OSTERHOFF



One of the highlights of the World's Fair held in St. Louis, Mo., in 1904 was the Palace of Electricity. It showcased endless electrical marvels and novelties at exhibits created by manufacturers and retailers. Among the latter was the Ewing-Merkle Electric Co. from the host city. It stocked Lionel electric trains and likely showed them at the world's fair.



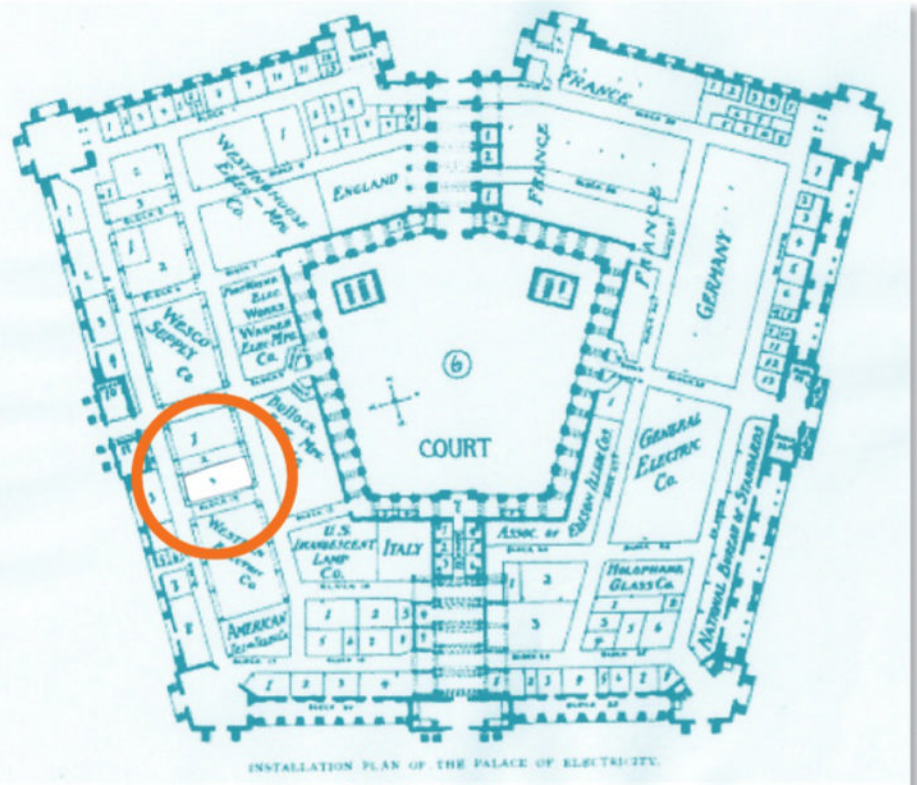
The machinery on display inside the Palace of Electricity must have left fairgoers in awe. Fascination with electricity and what it might accomplish was widespread at the time. As the floor plan of the building revealed, exhibitors came from around the globe. The circled area on the left side indicates where Ewing-Merkle had constructed its display.

The St. Louis World's Fair, better known as the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, took place from April through December 1904, on a 1,245-acre site near downtown St. Louis, Mo. The fair helped popularize the ice cream cone, peanut butter, puffed rice cereal, and Lionel Trains. To understand The Lionel Manufacturing Co.'s role at the fair, let's look at Joshua Lionel Cowen's (then Cohen) early efforts to promote his fairly new business.

EWING-MERKLE

The 1903 private-issue catalog from the Ewing-Merkle Electric Co. of St. Louis offers valuable insights about Lionel. It shows how a relatively obscure electric train manufacturer secured participation in a distinguished international event.

The Ewing-Merkle Co. was located at 1106 Pine St. in downtown St. Louis, an area known for its many industries focused on the growing markets for telephone and electrical products. Prior to the establishment of Ewing-Merkle, this address had been home to electric supply firms; it served similar purposes after the company's closure.





SEVEN FLOORS FILLED

We issue a large Green Book of General Supplies and special bulletins on Dynamot, Motors, Arc Lamps, Incandescent Lamps, Fans, Watchmen's Registers, Lighting Supplies, and carry in stock everything used in the electrical business.

WE WANT YOUR TRADE
DO IT NOW

EWING-MERKLE ELECTRIC CO.,
ST. LOUIS, U. S. A.



Ewing-Merkle Electric Co. issued its own catalog for retailers and consumers in 1903. The firm left no doubt that it aimed to reach boys interested in “electrical novelties.”

The firm was incorporated in April 1903 by Nathaniel W. Ewing, a 31-year-old entrepreneur from St. Louis who assumed the role of president, and William S. Merkle, age 35, who was appointed general manager. Other entrepreneurs also contributed to the company’s foundation.

Thanks to its “Everbest” brand, Ewing-Merkle became a well-respected St. Louis business, specializing in telephones, electrical novelties, dry-cell batteries, and electric motors. It secured a strong position in distributing products of fast-growing businesses: Sumter Telephone Manufacturing Co. of Sumter, S.C.; Prometheus Electric Co. of New York City, known for cooking utensils; and American Circular Loom Co. of Chelsea, Mass., known for flexible electric conduits.

Of great importance to toy train historians, Ewing-Merkle was a distributor for The Lionel Manufacturing Co. However, the toy train products Ewing-Merkle advertised never bore the name “Lionel.”

LIONEL AT THE FAIR

After losing a bid to Chicago to host the 1893 World’s Fair, St. Louis organizers vowed to present an even more impressive global exposition. The Louisiana Purchase Exposition, postponed from 1903 to 1904, became a substantial endeavor that showcased many contemporary scientific and

commercial innovations, alongside the ceremonial hallmarks and optimism of the new century. The local fairgrounds encompassed an extensive area, necessitating maps and trams for visitors to navigate its many attractions efficiently.

Years of meticulous planning and coordination culminated in the opening of the fair on April 30, 1904, helping St. Louis emerge as a symbol of progress and aspiration. Concurrently, it hosted the third modern Olympic Games, highlighting its growing significance.

For The Lionel Manufacturing Co., the fair was both an opportunity and a proving ground. Securing a place among the exhibitors meant positioning its products at the heart of progress, amid innovations destined to shape daily life for generations to come.

Within the Palace of Electricity — a soaring structure dedicated to the miracles wrought by current and coil — Lionel’s wares, which consisted of toy trains, batteries, and small motors, would be displayed alongside key advancements in lighting, telephone communication, and electric-generating machinery. Lionel’s electric trains were more than toys; they were symbols of a future powered by imagination and ingenuity.

The scale and innovation showcased at the exposition were unmatched: grand

pavilions, gleaming palaces, and dazzling exhibits. Lionel’s participation was strategic and symbolic. Nestled among other pioneers of electricity, its displays of miniature trains and electric motors caught the eyes of curious visitors and budding enthusiasts alike.

The St. Louis World’s Fair provided Lionel with a platform to demonstrate the excitement and endless possibilities of electric-powered toys. It also enabled the New York-based toy train maker to firmly establish its name in the burgeoning world of electrical entertainment.

This newfound exposure elevated Lionel’s status, opening doors to business alliances and expanding its distribution footprint. Ewing-Merkle’s support played a key role, ensuring that Lionel products reached new audiences beyond the fair-ground’s gates.

LIONEL EMERGES

Against this backdrop of invention and spectacle, Lionel’s presence was subtle yet significant. Its collaboration with Ewing-Merkle — respected in the region for electrical expertise — afforded the firm access to a discriminating audience awaiting the next new thing. The fair buzzed with excitement, and word spread about the miniature locomotives from Lionel that glided effortlessly along their tracks — capturing the collective fancy of seasoned engineers, curious kids, and everyone in between. Meanwhile, Lionel’s top rivals, such as Carlisle & Finch, Ives Manufacturing, and Knapp, were notably absent.

The Palace of Electricity served as a significant testament to the technological advancements of its time and was described in contemporary press accounts as “one of the great centers of attraction at the fair due to the large number and variety of operating exhibits.” Records indicate that Lionel featured an operational exhibit within the palace. The structure itself was expansive, measuring 700 feet in width and 600 feet in depth, designed in a pentagonal shape that enclosed a spacious courtyard. The building’s construction cost reached \$400,000, equivalent to more than \$13 million today.

LIONEL EXHIBIT

The Lionel exhibit was assigned to Block 14, alongside seven companies within the Ewing-Merkle collective displays. Even though toy exhibits at the St. Louis fair were usually placed inside the Palace of

Manufactures, Lionel, displaying a novel application of electricity, appeared in the Palace of Electricity with General Electric, Westinghouse, and Edison Manufacturing.

Lighting pioneer Thomas Edison visited the fair and oversaw the assembly and installation of electrical exhibits to ensure they were properly powered by his inventions. Although Joshua Cowen, Lionel's founder, was known to have visited St. Louis in 1903, there's no evidence that he or any Lionel employee visited the exposition a year later.

The grandeur of the exposition was not merely in its scale but also in its ambition to celebrate the cutting edge of innovation. Visitors who wandered into the Palace of Electricity found themselves surrounded by marvels previously confined to the realm of imagination: flickering incandescent bulbs, humming dynamos, and the intricate machinery of a dawning electrical and telephony age. Visitors to this electric wonderland were invited to send wireless messages from one end of the building to the opposite end.

Lionel's small yet significant display offered a captivating blend of entertainment and technical prowess. The strongest endorsement of Lionel's involvement was recorded in the *Rand McNally Guide to the World's Fair*, which placed the emerging firm in the publication under "Notable Exhibits: Electric Toys and novelties. Will interest the children."

Considering the St. Louis World's Fair had more than 2,500 exhibitors from just the United States, this was an incredible recognition for Cohen and his pioneering electric toy train company. All the same, in spite of the popularity of Lionel's exhibit, there is no evidence that an official medal of achievement was awarded to the toy train maker.

Crowds gathered in awe as miniature locomotives traced endless loops of track, their tiny lights glimmering beneath the palace's 80-foot-high ceiling. Children pressed eagerly against the railings, while adults exchanged knowing glances, recognizing the transformative potential of such inventions.

LASTING IMPACT

The Lionel exhibit represented for many attendees their first encounter with toys that moved as if by magic — except the mystery was revealed in the whir and click of Lionel's electric motors. The public's fascination was evident, as visitors

returned often to watch the many miniature electric trains race along their imaginary routes and dreamed of the future, when electric marvels of this nature were certain to grace their own homes.

Ewing-Merkle, following its successful participation at the St. Louis World's Fair, went on serving as a distributor for Lionel products through 1908. The company's different publications retained the "Everbest" branding while promoting Lionel merchandise. The November 1907 issue included a page advertising what clearly were Lionel models. Three of the models were identified with product numbers identical to what Lionel used.

Unfortunately for Ewing-Merkle, reduced engagement with the expanding

telephone market and aggressive competition in the electrical components space weakened its profitability. Furthermore, limited association with the increasingly prominent "Lionel" brand may have played a role in the company's decline. As a consequence, the Ewing-Merkle Electric Co. was voluntarily dissolved sometime during 1908.

There remains uncertainty about the extent of The Lionel Manufacturing Co.'s participation in the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904. But the firm's association with Ewing-Merkle at that noteworthy event signified the commencement of a new era for Lionel in advancing the development and marketing of its electric toy trains. **CTT**

It's not the complaints which are made, but the complaints which are not made that injure a business.

EVERBEST MAGAZINE
NOVEMBER - 1907

24 EVERBEST

ELECTRIC TRACTION

No. 100. Actual size 12 in. long. No. 101. Actual size 12 in. long. No. 102. Actual size 12 in. long.

The outfits consist of car and 12 ft. of track

Every line of the above motor cars are carried out to the proper proportions. The tracks, rollers and couplers are cast iron. The rails is constructed of sheet steel. All parts are enamelled and lettered in lacquer-like colors.

Write for descriptive catalog and special prices.

EWING-MERKLE ELECTRIC CO.

MAGAZINE

TRADE MARK
No. "K.K."
WEIGHT

Has a much tougher and lighter insulation than that of other makes, therefore goes farther

Benedict-Burnham Mfg. Co. Waterbury, Connecticut

PORCELAIN TUBE AND CARBON CUTTER

This tool is so designed that pressure is applied to the tube equally at four points, thereby causing the tube to snap off at any point where pressure is applied. By using this tool there will be no wasting of tubes. It needs no sharpening and is made in a convenient size to carry, weighing only fourteen ounces. Made adjustable to 5, 6, 8, 12 and 16 inch tubes or any size of arc-light carbons. No wireman's kit is complete without it.

NICKEL-PLATE FINISH. PRICE \$2.50

To boost sales and promote general interest in electricity, Ewing-Merkle launched *Everbest* magazine. The November 1907 issue showed three Lionel models for sale.

Focus on decals

LEARN HOW LIONEL DECORATED ITS POSTWAR LOCOMOTIVES

STORY BY LEN CARPARELLI

PHOTOS BY CODY GRIVNO AND WILLIAM ZUBACK



As the postwar period began for Lionel, concern for more colorful and highly decorative products became paramount. The company began studying different processes for decorating its trains.

The tried-and-true methods — heat and rubber-stamping — were used to great success, but both had limitations. Heat-stamping required a fairly flat surface and could print only one color at a time, making it highly labor intensive. Rubber-stamping could print as many as three colors at a time, but they weren't always crisp. Furthermore, the line up of colors was not always precise.

Lionel did make limited use of screen printing, better known as silk screening, in the 1950s. However, it required a professional printer. Also, the screens had a tendency to break down or leak after only a few hundred passes, often causing blurring. The results weren't always top notch.

Therefore, supervisors at Lionel were seeking additional ways of decorating locomotives in the 1950s and '60s. They discovered the advantages of decals, especially when adding graphics to diesels. Since most decals contained up to five clear color designs, the final decoration could be applied by a worker with a simple



The New York Central red nose herald was applied as a decal on the Nos. 2333 and 2344 F3 diesel locomotives.

roll of paper towels and a dish of water — just the way modelers were doing at home.

INTRODUCING DECALS

Decals have been around for a long time. The full name is actually “decalcomania,” a term that comes from combining two French words meaning “to trace” and “the art of imitating porcelain ware.”

A design is printed on special water-

The carrier film in older decals often yellow or create a “halo” around the decal. In some cases, like with the No. 2373 Canadian Pacific F3, the entire front of the engine can appear discolored.

sensitive paper and coated with a clear carrier film to contain the design and allow it to transfer onto the intended object. When immersed in water, the entire design and carrier film slip off the transfer paper and can be placed wherever desired. Decals are delicate, thin, and prone to tearing and rupture at this stage.

For Lionel, probably the most famous water decals were the lettering and number sets they made for the No. 700K, the kit sold to build a scale 4-6-4 New York Central Hudson in the late prewar era. While regular-production 700Es were lettered in silver using rubber stamping, the 700K decal lettering sets were white, although most have yellowed with age.

HOW DECALS ARE MADE

Decals are manufactured most often by screen printing on a special transfer paper. A unique decal lacquer ink is printed one color at a time onto the paper. Full decal sheets may contain 100 or more complete decals. Quite often the clear “carrier” film

LIONEL'S POSTWAR LOCOMOTIVE DECALS

Len included in this chart information about most of the 11 major O and Super O types of motive power Lionel made during the postwar era, along with facts about the decals used for their decoration. Missing catalog numbers in a series do not represent an accidental omission; rather, they mean that no decals were used in the production of that item. An example would be the No. 2351 Milwaukee Road EP-5.

F3 diesels			
2333/2343	Santa Fe	1948-52	Yellow nose (1) and red "GM" (2)
2333/2344	NYC	1948-52	Red nose oval (1) and black "GM" (2)
2345	West Pacific	1952	Black/red/white nose and small black "GM" (2)
2353/2383	Santa Fe	1953-55, 1958-66	Same as 2343 but no "GM" decal
2354	NYC	1953-55	Same as 2344; GM logo was heat stamped
2355	West Pacific	1953	Same as 2345; GM logo was heat stamped
2356	Southern	1954-56	Nose circle logo/no "GM" markings
2363	Ill Central	1955-56	Nose diamond only
2240/2367	Wabash	1955-56	Nose "flag" on both versions
2373	Can Pacific	1957	Nose CP logo and yellow wings
2378	Milw Road	1956	Flame decal covers entire front of engine
2379	D&RGW	1957-58	Full wraparound decal, which serves to continue the side stripe decoration, and small "Rio Grande" emblazoned across nose. All "237X" series have tendency for details to flake off around front louvers.
2245	<i>Texas Special</i>	1954-55	Only F3 to use side decals. Both "Katy" and "Frisco" logos are tied together by the decal's carrier film, which is always yellowed.
FM diesels			
2341	Jersey Cent	1956	Nose "Statue of Liberty" logo on both ends; "FM" red circle side logo
2331	Virginian	1955-58	Nose "VGN" red circle logo; "FM" red circle side logo; number 2331 replacing JC "Statue of Liberty" logo
2322	Virginian	1965-66	Same as 2331 but has correct 2322 number
2321	Lackawanna	1954-56	Lackawanna end square with no number, "FM" red circle side logo
EP-5 electrics			
2350	New Haven	1956-58	Full wraparound nose logo, block coloring, and continuation of "McGuinness" paint scheme decoration. Only postwar Lionel pressure-sensitive decal ever made.
2352	Pennsylvania	1958-59	Standard "PRR" keystones, front and sides large wraparound water decal, susceptible to flaking
2358	Great North	1959-60	Continued paint decoration; front Great Northern "Matterhorn"
GG1s and Rectifiers			
2332	PRR/black PRR/green	1947-49	All Lionel GG1s contained small PRR side keystones (early 2332s were rubber stamped) and correct number keystones on each end below the headlight
2330/40/60	PRR/5 stripes	1950,55-56	
2360	PRR/1 stripe	1958,61-63	
2329	Virginian	1958-59	White VGN logo and yellow wings
Alcos			
204/208	Santa Fe	1957-59	Ornate nose logo, striping, coloring, and paint continuation makes this, along with the 2378, one of the most complicated and unique details in Lionel's history
209	New Haven	1958	Nose logo similar to 2350 but water decal
212/215/218	Santa Fe	1959-66	Nose logo similar to 2383
223	Santa Fe	1963	Same as 212
2023/2033	UP	1950-54	Nose logo and wings, red white blue
2031/2041	Rock Island	1952-54	Nose logo, red and white
2032	Erie	1952-54	Nose logo and wings, side "diamonds" (2 on each side) that contain Erie logo and "Built by Lionel"
NW2 switchers			
601/602	Seaboard	1956-58	"Heart" decal on each cab side
621	Jersey Cent	1956-57	Same as FM 2341 but in orange on each side below cab window
622/623	AT&SF	1949-54	ATSF square on each side of long cab hood
624	C&O	1952-54	Lettering detail in yellow on each side on long hood, C&O circle on each side of cab below window
6250	Seaboard	1954-55	Same as 601 and 602
GP7			
2337/2339	Wabash	1957-58	Wabash "flag," different from 2367 F3 on each side of cab below window

No other GP7 or GP9 used decals

Steam locomotives

The only steam engines in Lionel's postwar line to make use of water decals were the Nos. 2025/35 (and 675) series K4 type, and the No. 2020 (671/681/682) S2 steam turbine. Surprisingly, Lionel planted PRR keystones on the boiler fronts of both these engines with the prototype numbers "5690" and "6200." A rare variation of the 675 sports a rubber-stamped white keystone front.



These decals were used on the No. 2245 Texas Special F3s.

BACKGROUND

This story was purchased in the late 1990s and filed away. I discovered it in late 2024, but it had no photographs. Senior Editor Roger Carp worked with Len Carparelli to mail postwar decals for photos. Within weeks of Roger shipping the decals back to Len, he passed away unexpectedly (see obituary in the Winter 2025 issue). I hope you enjoy this fascinating and informative article. — *Rene*



is printed as both a base coat and a top overcoat to “seal” the colors for strength and durability and to prevent fading of the light-sensitive colors. Unfortunately, over time, the clear lacquer coat — like most lacquers and shellacs — yellows or oxidizes. This creates an amber-like halo around the decal design, with the yellowing or ambering being the best way to

identify an original Lionel decal.

The inks used to create decals today are not as light sensitive as their 1950s counterparts, so recently manufactured decals should not exhibit the vast discoloration of their earlier cousins. While some manufacturers will try to artificially “yellow” their decals to give them a vintage look, the difference is obvious. If you carry around a small, original “ambered” decal with you, just compare it to any non-original aftermarket decal. You’ll easily see the difference on most any item.

Ambering and discoloring are not the same with every original Lionel decal. Some are slightly yellowed while others may look like they’ve been bathed in rust. The differences come from factors such as storage, temperature, humidity, and exposure to heat, light, and air.



The front of the No. 2345 Western Pacific F3 A units featured this wraparound decal.



Two versions of the General Motors decal used on F3s.

DECAL DISADVANTAGES

There are two disadvantages to water decals. First, they are fragile. When placed over irregular surfaces, they will over time



The standard Pennsylvania RR keystone decal was used on No. 2352 EP-5 electric locomotives.

flake and peel, leaving a tattered and damaged look to an item.

Notorious among postwar Lionel locomotives are the Nos. 2358 Great Northern EP-5, whose large nose decals often react to the orange paint underneath, and 2373 Canadian Pacific, 2378 Milwaukee Road, and 2379 Denver & Rio Grande Western F3s, which are often found with the decal image lost by the front nose louvers, leaving an incomplete decoration image.

In 1970, General Mills (then manufacturing Lionel trains) solved this problem by eliminating the nose louver detail.

Second, the decal carrier film leaves an unsightly halo around the entire image and, as mentioned earlier, has an unfortunate tendency to yellow with age. In some instances, such as the Canadian Pacific F3s, where large sections of the decal are held together by the carrier, the entire front of the locomotive can appear discolored (see lead photo). Although this flaw usually will not affect the investment quality of the piece, provided the decal is not broken, it looks downright awful.

AN UNUSUAL "DECAL" VARIATION

The only variation from water-release decals in Lionel's postwar catalog that I'm aware of is the No. 2350 New Haven EP-5. The nose graphic was complex, and Lionel originally tried inking on the detail while rubber-stamping the "NH" nose graphic. Results were spotty, the rejection rate was high, and Lionel was faced with a problem. As most collectors know, factory-painted-nose New Havens have become highly desirable.

The factory eventually solved the problem by resorting to a pressure-sensitive cellophane transfer (not, strictly speaking, a decal). Two of these unique transfers were pasted across the double-ended noses of the most common version of every 2350.

Why Lionel chose this pressure-sensitive transfer as opposed to the tried-and-true water decal is beyond me. Curiously, the No. 209 New Haven Alco diesel with almost an identical nose graphic did make use of a water decal.

Original 2350s are prone to the same shortcomings as water-release decals, as



Lionel did not manufacture its own decals, but purchased them from several American manufacturers. The backs of these decals show some of the names.

the paint often flakes. But the cellophane backing does not, which is why 2350s are often found with high paint loss and what looks like adhesive tape underneath.

DECAL MANUFACTURERS

In the 1950s, Lionel did not manufacture its own decals; instead, it purchased them from several sources. The orders were huge, so that one manufacturer couldn't keep them supplied on a timely basis.

The consensus is that at its peak, Lionel was producing 120 Santa Fe F3 sets an hour! In two 8-hour shifts, they'd produce 1,920 engines a day, or 11,520 during a six-day work week. This translates to 46,080 a month for each of the four months at the peak of production That's

approximately 184,320 models a year

Each No. 2343 Santa Fe A-A combination used six decals — four "GMs" and two Santa Fe nose decals — meaning that for one single model, Lionel required 1,105,920 decals per year. That's a pretty tall order! Interestingly, I have observed just the "Santa Fe" and "GM" decals from several different manufacturers.

Some of the manufacturers that Lionel contracted during postwar days were American Decalcomania Co., New York; Chicago Decal Co.; Meyercord Co., Chicago; and Palm Bros., Cincinnati, Ohio.

All in all, Lionel's decals were ingenious. They did exactly what was asked of them, solving the complex decoration problems of the 1950s. **CTT**

Instead of a decal, Lionel used a pressure-sensitive cellophane transfer on the No. 2350 New Haven EP-5. The paint often flaked, but the cellophane backing did not, thereby leaving behind what looked like adhesive tape.





American Flyer 4-4-2 Atlantic

S GAUGE STEAM ENGINE HELPED LAUNCH A DISTINGUISHED CAREER IN JOURNALISM

STORY BY ROGER CARP AND KEVIN KEEFE

Which locomotive means the most to you?

American Flyer's No. 303 Reading Lines 4-4-2 Atlantic steam engine and tender helped to inspire a young boy growing up near Chicago in the middle 1950s to consider how he might make railroading the essence of his career. Kevin Keefe, who would grow up to serve as a distinguished editor for *Trains Magazine* at Kalmbach Publishing Co. in Milwaukee, spoke fondly of the small yet mighty S gauge locomotive he received as a youngster for Christmas.

WHAT IT WAS

"My parents, Woody and Marie Keefe, surprised me that morning when I was only four years old with the finest gift I could imagine," Kevin began.

"I wish I could recall whether it was Christmas of 1954 or '55. However, I know for sure that I got a Flyer steam engine and tender lettered for the Reading Lines. One thing fixed in my memory about the steamer is that the engineers designing it had made sure it had an arched cab window. Years later I learned that feature was a Reading tradition."

The Flyer 4-4-2 Atlantic came painted matte black with white lettering. It was equipped with an operating headlight, a three-position reverse unit, a smoke

mechanism, and a feature the A.C. Gilbert Co. promoted as "Choo-Choo sound." In addition to the locomotive, what Kevin presumed was an entire set included three freight cars, one of which was a dark red stockcar he managed to save. At the end of the train rode a Reading-style rooftop-cupola caboose.

"My family was living in Park Forest, Ill.," Kevin said, "the postwar planned community suburb adjacent to Chicago Heights. The nearby outdoor shopping mall, Park Forest Plaza, had a Sears, Roebuck & Co.; a Marshall Field's; and a Goldblatt's store. I'd bet the Flyer set came from one of them."

Maybe the best part, Kevin went on, was the fact that the Flyer train came with a 4 x 8-foot sheet of plywood someone had painted green with a couple of black streets running across it before laying down a loop of S gauge track. There was enough space for a few buildings, including a depot and a gasoline station from the Plasticville U.S.A. line.

WHY HE LOVES IT

What made — and still makes — the middle-of-the-line locomotive so special to

Kevin? "This gift was a thrill for me. My nascent love of trains had made an impression on my parents, and to have the interest rewarded with an electric toy train was pretty heady stuff for a four-year-old. Plus, as every kid with an American Flyer train realized, the track had two rails unlike the three-rail track Lionel used. My train was more like the real thing.

"My fascination stemmed in part from living near the main line of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern RR. Whenever we drove around in the family Ford, I hoped to catch a glimpse of orange EJ&E diesels running along U.S. 30 on the north edge of town.

"Other family trips got me hooked on the Chicago & Eastern Illinois RR, for which my grandfather and great-grandfather had worked. Having that train running in circles on the living-room floor helped crystallize my interest in trains, and we later found a semi-permanent place to set up the layout in the basement."

Kevin concluded by pointing out how his interest in S gauge would decline once he reached adolescence. "I was destined to become a railfan and not a modeler. That American Flyer set remains a primary influence, and I'm happy to report I still have that Atlantic." **CTT**

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Sunset Models 3rd Rail Siemens Charger



CODY GRIVNO PHOTO

Sunset Models 3rd Rail has produced the Siemens Mobility's Charger diesel locomotive in both SC44 and ALC42 types in O scale. Production and distribution are overseen by Third & Townsend Models, which recently partnered with Sunset Models Inc., its subsidiary 3rd Rail Division, and Golden Gate Depot.

OUT OF THE BOX

Sunset Models 3rd Rail offers the Charger in both SC44 and ALC42 series. The former is available in Amtrak's Midwest, Pacific Surfliner, Caltrans, and Cascade schemes, along with MARC, Altamont Corridor Express, Coaster, and Siemens Demonstrator liveries. The latter features Amtrak No. 301 in the "Day One" scheme, plus the carrier's Phases 6-7 liveries and a Metro-North Railroad option. This review focuses on the Amtrak Midwest SC44 Charger No. 4630 in 3 rail.

Measuring 18" coupler to coupler, the model is nearly spot-on for 1:48-scale accuracy when compared to the

prototype's 71.5-foot length.

The Amtrak Midwest color scheme is flawless. Even the abstract polka dot pattern, adopted from the Siemens Demonstrator livery, appears on point. Most of the decaled numbers and lettering are legible. There are decals on the Amtrak Midwest model that aren't present, specifically the logos at the end of the locomotive for the state departments of transportation that support regional services.

ON THE TRACK

The engine is equipped with Lionel's TMCC and RailSounds, along with cruise circuit boards by Electric Railway Circuits (ERR). Controls for the smoke unit and sound volume are located under a magnet-attached hatch in the rear electrical equipment compartment. A removable 9-volt battery is also included for conventional operations.

Our No. 4630 was tested at the Milwaukee Lionel Railroad Club with three Atlas O Amtrak Horizon passenger cars. The model effortlessly

SUNSET/3RD RAIL SIEMENS SC44 CHARGER

Features: ABS body, high-end details, including brass inlay wheels, 3 Rail ERR cruise circuit boards, TMCC, and RailSounds, O-72 operation

MSRP: \$849.95

Website: thirdandtownsendmodels.com

started the short train, gliding smoothly over switches with minimal speed fluctuations. There is a bit of practice in keeping speed changes smooth. Once you feel comfortable with the controls, the locomotive delivers an impressive performance.

The prototypes are Tier 4 emission compliant. Despite this, the 1:48-scale model still includes a smoke unit that operates separately in conventional and TMCC modes.

The loud and clear sound effects, delivered through dual speakers, utilize Lionel's RailSounds files. However, the horn does not sound like a Nathan K5LA.

LED lighting includes directional headlight and marker lights, lighted number boxes, flashing beacons on the

roof, ditch lights, cab lights, and lights shining through mesh grids on the sides of the cooling compartment.

Certain light features operate differently than intended. The roof beacon, interior cab, and cooling compartment lights turn on only when the model is set to reverse; they remain off when in forward.

The ditch lights operate for only a few seconds after either cycling all lights off and on again with AUX 2 or by setting the locomotive in reverse and then back to forward. According to Jay Escamilla, this was a design choice caused by constraints of the TMCC system during the models' development.

Overall, you're getting a high-end model that's a solid performer. — *Lucas Iverson*

Atlas O Premier SD70MAC



The real headliner of the spring 2023 Atlas O catalog was the superb SD70MAC, a classic six-axle diesel electric locomotive.

The SD70MAC was produced in the 1990s by the Electro-Motive Division of General Motors (EMD). The SD70MAC was part of the transition from DC to AC traction motors.

These AC-powered locomotives proved to be more efficient while in service and allowed the Burlington Northern, the first railroad to adopt them, to reduce the number of locomotives needed for heavy consists. Production wrapped on these locomotives in the early 2000s, though many of them can still be found on short and mainline service.

OUT OF THE BOX

Atlas's version features intricately applied details on a die-cast metal frame. The unit has

LED directional lighting and cab illumination with painted crew figures. The pilots feature a removable snowplow and front and rear Proto-Couplers. The smoke unit is fan driven and can be filled directly from the stack; however, a needle dropper is recommended to prevent spillage.

These ex-MTH-tooled models check every box: crisp paint, see-through ventilation, and quality sounds that add a dynamic appearance to any layout. The model pictured here, Union Pacific "We are ONE" paint scheme, has more complex details than other cataloged models.

The prototype was launched in 2021 to celebrate Employee Resource Groups across the Union Pacific company. The locomotive features a rainbow of colors on the side. Atlas replicated this flawlessly. Furthermore, Atlas continues to mix in see-through

ventilation with traditional molded-in details to create a dynamic appearance that is sure to turn heads as it rolls down the track.

At 18 inches in length, this

model checks the "pretty much scale" box as the prototype is 74 feet long. With an unflanged middle axle, it can navigate O-42 curves, making it just about small enough for anyone to add to their layout and collection.

Atlas has cataloged a variety of road names: BNSF (No. 30138201), CSX (No. 30138217), Lake State Railway (No. 30128219), Union Pacific "We are ONE" (No. 30138225), and Union Pacific "Big Boy Escort" (No. 30138226). — Chris Montagna

Get more O gauge action on the Chris's Trains & Things channel on YouTube.



ATLAS O PREMIER SD70MAC

Features: Proto-Sound 3.0, operating smoke units, spinning roof fans, two remotely controlled Proto-Couplers, O-42 operation, lighted cab interior, two cab figures

MSRP: \$679.95

Website: shop.atlasrr.com

MTH Track Cleaning Car with Power Meter

This 40-foot boxcar is an MTH custom run from Ross Custom Switches that includes a voltmeter and a track-cleaning system from Many New Products (MNP). A voltmeter is an instrument that measures voltage between two points in a circuit. This one is an analog meter that measures either AC or DC.

Why would I want a voltmeter? I would have asked the same question until recently. I discovered that either a section of track on the CTT in-house layout stopped working. It took quite a bit of troubleshooting to determine the faulty section. A voltmeter would have been a handy tool to quickly locate the problem area.

Routine track cleaning ensures smooth operation and is an important part of regular maintenance. The MNP track-cleaning system contains dual motors with discs mounted on small, spring-loaded posts. The discs contain replaceable peel-and-stick cleaning pads. Purchase extra pads from MNP.

The voltmeter is visible on both sides of the O gauge car, and starts as power is applied. Co-worker Lucas Iverson and I

did testing on our in-house layout, the City Terminal & Transfer. We were pleased at how accurate the meter was when applying power from an MTH Z-4000 transformer. It quickly showed the location of the short on the problematic section of FasTrack.

On the bottom of the boxcar is a black switch labeled on and off. This is to activate the two track-cleaning motors (one for each disc). The rubber discs/pads are not permanently fixed to the car and slide on to a spring-loaded metal post.

Be careful when you flip over the boxcar to set it on the track, as the discs can fall off the posts. I found it best to put my hand around the car, using my index and pinky fingers to hold the pads in place while I lowered it onto the track.

You can apply power, flip the switch, and slowly push the car around the track. However, it's more fun to use a locomotive. My first test used an MTH diesel on Lionel FasTrack. Even with a quick pass around the layout, the cleaner removed a good amount of

gunk from the rails. It had no problem on the turnouts or curves on our layout.

Later, I tested the car using a K-Line 0-4-0 Porter on my home layout, which has Lionel tubular track with O-30 curves. As a test, I applied some Goo Gone to one pad and left the other dry. The pad with Goo Gone picked up more dirt. The next morning, the pad with the Goo Gone had loosened the adhesive, which exposed the clean side. I'd use some tacky glue or rubber cement to reattach it, maximizing its use. Be sure you wipe the rails after using the car to remove all Goo Gone residue from the track.

I had problems operating the car at home. It derailed several times during operation with the locomotive. However, when I removed the engine and pushed the car by hand, it did not derail. Eventually, I got it rolling and had no problems. The car picked up a lot of dirt from the rails after about 10 trips around my home layout.

Lucas borrowed the car to test on the Milwaukee Lionel

Railroad Club's layout to run on both their tubular and scale track. He had no problems, and the car picked up a lot of dirt using an 0-6-0 switcher at slow speeds. Perhaps the key is going slowly, or maybe the tight curves and lack of many straight sections on my home layout was to blame. Adding the Goo Gone could make a difference too.

Overall, this is a useful car that I will keep on hand for both troubleshooting and track cleaning. — *Rene Schweitzer*



CODY GRIVNO PHOTOS



Two cleaning pads, attached to discs, rest on spring-loaded posts.

MTH TRACK CLEANING CAR WITH POWER METER (RB2024/20-94756)

Features: AC or DC operation, motorized cleaning discs, replaceable peel-and-stick cleaning pads, working voltmeter, O-27 operation

MSRP: \$349.95

Website: rossswitches.com, 800-331-1395

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- Bar Mills Modelworks Insta-Fence kit
- Lionel *Star Wars* aquarium car
- Atlas O 1973 Ford F100 pickup truck

Bar Mills Scale Model Works billboards

The relatively low cost of laser-cutting tool equipment and the ease of on-demand production make it possible for small retailers to enter the model kit business. Among the early and most prolific of the laser-cut kit

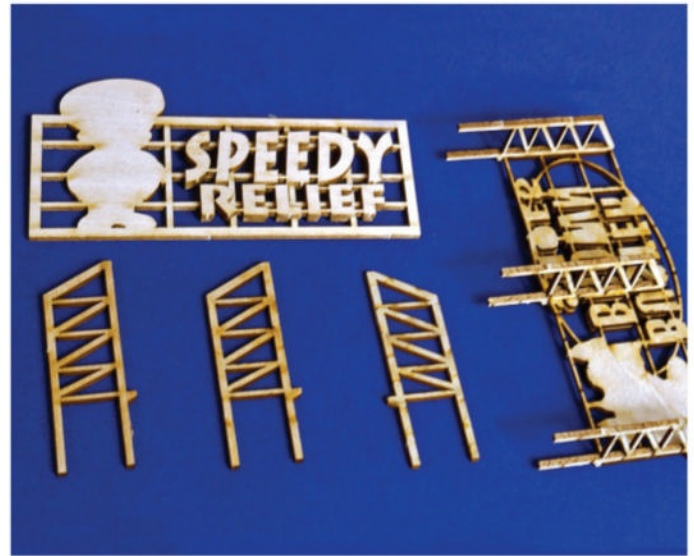
manufacturers is Bar Mills Scale Model Works. The firm's billboards are a good introduction to laser kits. They are simple to build yet will provide a good amount of detail and add life to your model railroads. You'll need a hobby

knife, glue, and paint. All signs are available in small (N and HO) and large (HO and O) sizes. Any of Bar Mills' signs can be used on your layout. After all, billboards come in different sizes in the real world. — *Michael Tylick*

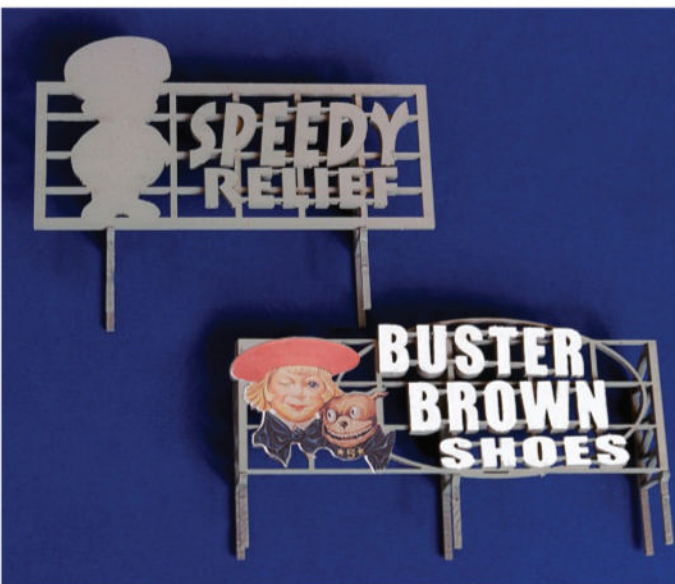
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Scales: Small (N/HO), Large (HO/O)
MSRP: \$9.95 to 11.95 each
Website: barmillsmodels.com



The carrier sheet for one of the Bar Mills multiple-scale billboards. A sharp hobby knife will cut the small nubs holding the parts to the carrier sheet.



The sign layers are glued together, and the supporting brackets are glued to the back of the gridwork. Michael Tylick (the CTT reviewer) used Elmer's Glue-All, but he says any wood glue is acceptable.



To prevent the billboard from warping it's important to paint both sides of the wood. Although the steelwork used for prototype signs is often black, you can substitute gray paint. The colored artwork stickers are also laser-cut and easy to apply.



The signs are removable. Insert straight pins into the sign posts and cut off the pin heads. Add a slice of (yellow) electrical insulation over the pins' ends. Drill small holes into a rooftop. Secure the insulation pads to the rooftop with CA. The sign slides into place.

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Schedule of Events

CO, DENVER: Rocky Mountain Train Show. April 11-12, 2026. National Western Complex, 4655 Humboldt St., Denver, CO 80216. Saturday, 9:00am-5:00pm, Sunday 9:00am-4:00pm. 3 acres of model trains, all scales, 30 layouts, 900 sales tables, clinics and more. Admission \$16.00, under 12/scouts in uniform FREE. Discounted tickets available for military/first responders through VetFix.org. Free Parking. 303-364-0274, www.RockyMountainTrainShow.com

FL, OCALA: Lions Bi-Annual Train Show. First Christian Church, 1908 E. Fort King St., Ocala, FL 34471. Saturday, March 14, 2026, 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

NC, RALEIGH: Neuse River Valley Model RR Club 9th annual SPRING INTO TRAINS Show. NEW DATES: May 23-24, Sat 9-5; Sun 10-4. Larger venue: Graham Building at NC State Fairgrounds. 400 vendor tables, 16 operating layouts. Display your models at our Craftsman's Showcase. Admission: \$10 covers both days, children 12 and under free with adult. Visit www.nrvclub.net

NJ, BRICK: ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents The Brick Train Show. Elks Lodge, 2491 Hooper Avenue, Brick, NJ 08723. Sunday, May 17, 2026, 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. April 11, 2026. 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, March 22, 2026, 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, LINDENHURST: Long Island Classic Train Show/Swap Meet. Fireman's Memorial Park, 555 Heling Blvd. (north of Hartford St.), Lindenhurst, NY 11757. March 15, 2026, September 13, 2026, and November 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

OK, GREATER TULSA AREA Train Show. April 24-25. Rhema Ninowski Recreation Center, 1367 West Kenosha, Broken Arrow, OK. Friday April 24, 5-7PM; Saturday April 25, 9AM-3PM. Admission: \$10 per adult, kids 12 and under free w/paid adult. Operating Layouts, Door Prizes, Concessions. Over 100 vendors tables. Presented by Heartland Toy Train Association. www.HeartlandToyTrains.org

PA, BEAVER FALLS: BLRHS Spring Train Show. Saturday, May 2, 2026, 10:00am-3:00pm. Chippewa Township VFD Social Hall, 2568 Darlington Rd., Beaver Falls, PA 15010. Adults \$5.00 (\$4.00 if you mention Classic Toy Trains ad). Children under 12 free. Tables \$25 each. For show info: blrhinc.org or table reservations: Tom Bianculli, tjbian64@gmail.com or 412-585-3614

PA, HAWLEY: Model Train Show & Sale. Hawley Fire Department, 17 Columbus Ave., Hawley, PA 18428. Sunday, April 12, 2026, 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission \$3.00, under 12 free with adult. Bill Dellling, 618 Fern St., Hawley, PA 18428, 570-226-3206.

PA, YORK: Barry King Memorial Train Show, Reliance Fire Hall, 1341 W. Market St., York, PA 17404. April 20-22, 2026, 9am-5pm. All gauges of trains and vintage toys for sale. Open to the public. Free admission. For vendor info please contact Todd or Bev Metcalf, 860-432-2124, trainsmore@aol.com

WA, CHEHALIS: Lewis County Model Railroad Club, Annual Spring Train Show and Swap Meet. Southwest Washington Fair Grounds, Blue Pavilion Building, 2555 N. National Ave., Chehalis, WA 98532. April 11 & 12, 2026. Saturday 10:00am-4:00pm and Sunday 10:00am-2:00pm. Admission \$5.00. Free parking. Contact information: Ted, 360-985-7788, or email: TedTrains@LewisCounty.com

WA, LONGVIEW: April 25, 2026 LK&R Model Railroad Club presents our Spring 2026 Model Train and Toy Swap Meet. Cowlitz County Event Center, 1900 7th Ave. 10am-3pm. Admission \$5.00. See https://www.cowlitzeventcenter.com/contact-event-professionals/ and scroll down for directions. Information for vendors and guests, visit: http://lkrtrainsyolasite.com or contact Howard Flick, 360-751-7276, email: flickh@yahoo.com

WA, SPOKANE: River City Modelers Spring Model Train Show, Spokane Fairgrounds, 404 N. Havana. Sunday, March 8, 2026, 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 shirley@busnws.com

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

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O Gauge For Sale

LIONEL MARX PLASTICVILLE: Big list of boxed sets, engines, cars, etc. Rare paper, catalogs, Lionel O, O27 & HO. Marx O & HO. Plasticville and Plasticville parts. Send \$3.00 postage, Judy Hajash, PO Box 5, Augusta, WV 26704-0005. 304-359-2194.

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Miscellaneous For Sale

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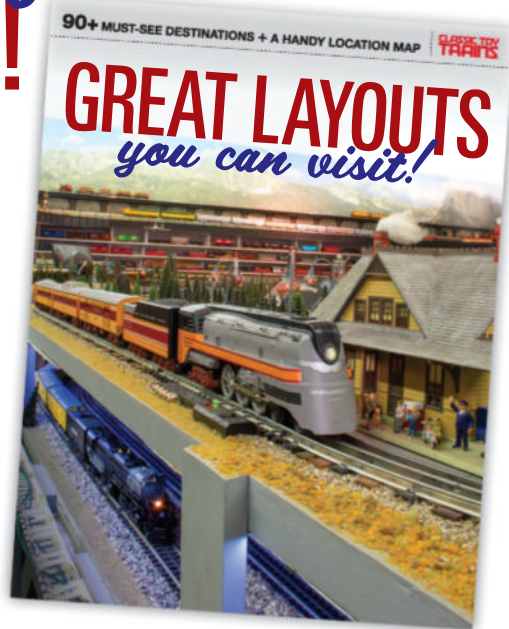
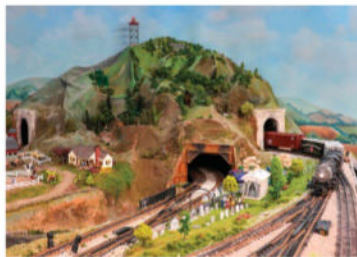
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17. Publication of Statement of Ownership will be in the Spring 2026 issue.		
18. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. (signed) Nicole McGuire, Chief Operations Officer		

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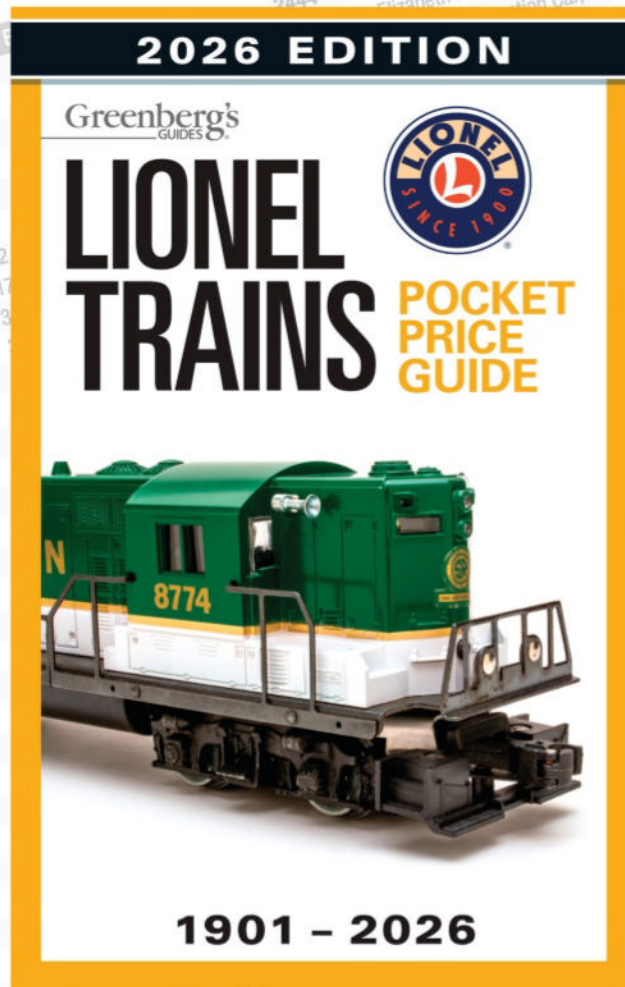
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Upgrade your tender's coal load

Your coffee maker's water filter may contain "black gold"

STORY & PHOTOS BY PATRICK J. MAUL

After changing the water filter on a Keurig coffee maker, I wondered what was inside that blue pouch. I cut it open with a sharp knife and realized I'd struck black gold! The charcoal was the perfect size for hopper car coal loads. I kept collecting the Keurig coal, and when I had enough, added it to some coal cars that were empty, but not capable of automatic dumping through coal doors.

That project was just the start. After I purchased a Lionel Legacy steam locomotive with a real coal load, I realized how pathetic some of my other tenders looked. I read articles and watched videos where people used some commercial products to improve their tenders. I read a suggestion using Elmer's glue I thought might work.

I borrowed a bottle of Elmer's white glue from our grandkids and without

removing anything from the tender, I squirted the glue on top of the existing coal load. I used a medium artist's paintbrush (also from the grandkids) and spread a thick layer of glue over the entire area. I kept the glue within the confines of the original load. If you get glue where you don't want it, simply wipe it off with a damp paper towel or rag.

I sprinkled more of the Keurig water filter "coal" on top of the glue. I patted it down and added more coal as I went along. Once I had completely covered the glue with a thick layer of the Keurig coal, I left it to dry overnight.

The next morning, I turned the tender over and let the excess coal drop onto my work board. (You could use a large pan or cookie sheet to catch the pieces.) The coal was glued tight, and no traces of the glue

remained! My tenders looked great! I've done several of them now, and have gotten the same great results.

If you notice a slightly thin area, apply more glue right over the existing coal and sprinkle on more coal pieces until you achieve the desired look.

I've also glued coal on the front of the tenders near the coal boards. You can add spilled coal to the tender deck by putting a small drop of glue (using a toothpick) and placing a few lumps of coal on top of the drop. Add more drops and spills to get the realistic effect that you want!

I can get enough material for two tenders from one water filter, with a little left over. The cost of this project was as close to free as you can get! As long as I keep drinking coffee, the coal will continue to flow from the Keurig mine! **CTT**



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New use for a Lionel barrel loader figure

I took a figure from a postwar Lionel No. 362 Barrel Loader and made him into a "muffler man" to sit on top of the gas station in my Plasticville village. I added a scrap piece of plastic to make it appear like he was holding a muffler and painted him to match the gas station. — Arthur Ames

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