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EDITOR'S NOTE

BY RENE SCHWEITZER

Never stop learning

Have you heard of the Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment? You answer 277 statements during a timed session, ranking each one on how it describes you. The results are compiled to discover your top five strengths.

I was surprised to find that learning was my top strength. After I thought about it, though, it really made sense. Every time I write or edit an article, I enjoy the process of learning a bit more about the hobby.

One of the great things about toy trains is the depth of the hobby. You can spend an entire lifetime learning and never know it all.

Collectors can focus on a specific era, manufacturer, type of product, variations of a product, or even boxes. There's also plenty of history to dig into, ranging from manufacturers to innovative employees and much more.

There's the entire process of designing and building a layout. Don't forget about operation. Do you just run your equipment, or do you meet with a group for more realistic operations? Today's technology with Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, and apps adds yet another layer to learn about.

I urge you to keep learning, no matter what your focus in the hobby. Try a new scenery technique. Read a book about a lesser-known manufacturer. Experiment with the MTH or Lionel smartphone app. You may find a new segment of the hobby that you love.

Rene Schweitzer, Editor
Feel free to send comments and questions to editor@ClassicToyTrains.com



I experimented with this Atlas pickup truck by adding weathering and details, like license plates and a driver. What skills do you want to learn?

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CLASSIC TOY TRAINS

OUR MISSION

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

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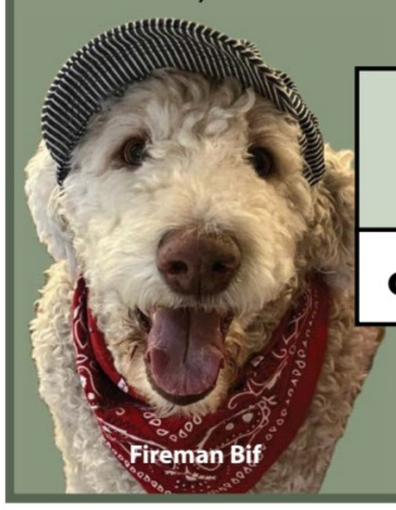
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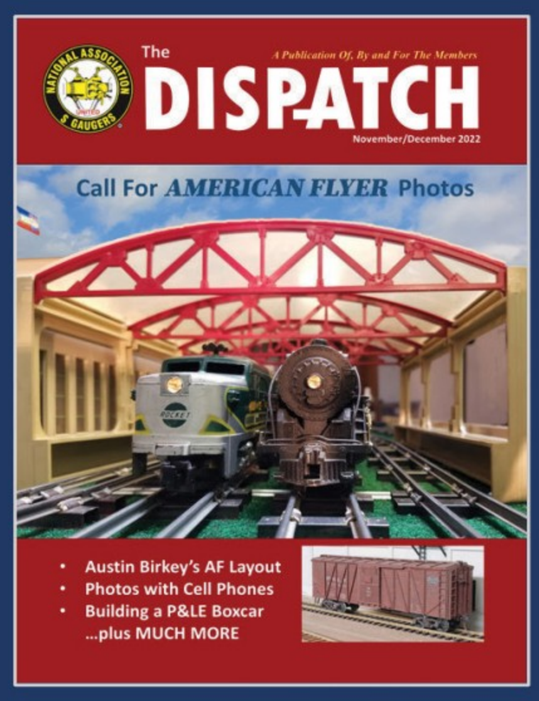


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Correct track plan



Like so many *Classic Toy Trains* readers, I was extremely interested to read in the Winter 2025 issue about Senior Editor Roger Carp planning to build a home O gauge layout that would pay tribute to the great display layouts Lionel had made during the postwar era. Too bad the excellent track plan prepared by Kellie Jaeger didn't have the crossover listed in the accompanying caption.

Please print the correct plan to help me and your many other thousands of readers. — *Rev. Philip Smith*

This is the correct track plan for Senior Editor Roger Carp's planned home layout. It has the crossover mentioned in the Winter 2025 issue but not shown on that plan. He mistakenly gave Illustrator Kellie Jaeger a preliminary plan and information instead of the final plan done by *Classic Toy Trains* contributor Peter H. Riddle.

WORLD'S FAIR RESEARCH

I had great fun researching Lionel's participation in the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904 to write the article in the Spring 2026 issue of CTT. This research included several visits to the Missouri Historical Society of St. Louis, which generously provided the two original photos of the Palace of Electricity used in my article. I wish to thank the organization for its kind support. — *Robert Osterhoff*

EXCELLENT BALANCE

I appreciate Editor Rene Schweitzer's asking in the Spring 2026 issue for feedback on whether *Classic Toy Trains* should highlight new products versus old products. I appreciate the balance of both, as I think today's offerings are tomorrow's classics. I collect and operate new and old trains, so I enjoy reading articles about both. Thanks for publishing a great magazine and for everything the CTT staff does for our hobby. — *Rob Smith*

WHAT'S WABASH?

Your mention of Roger Carp's story about metal railroad heralds in cereal boxes brought back a memory from my childhood in the 1950s. I was the only one in my family that ate boxed cereal, so I managed to get just a few heralds. I remember getting "Follow the Flag Wabash" and asking my folks what "Follow the Flag" meant. The name "Wabash" seemed kind of funny too! — *Robert Nordberg*

FORGOT GM DECALS

I noticed omissions in "Focus on decals" in the Spring 2026 CTT. The NW2 section of the decals left out the large General Motors decals below the number on the cab sides of the earliest versions of the Lionel Nos. 622 and 6220 Santa Fe diesel switcher. Later ones had small GM decals on the cab sides below the builder's plate.

Early versions of the Nos. 623 Santa Fe and 624 Chesapeake & Ohio switchers also had small GM decals at the same location. — *Wayne Westervelt*



Lionel's Nos. 622, 623, and 6220 Santa FE NW2 diesel switchers from the postwar era all came with General Motors decals. This one has the small GM.

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58557	San Pedro & Southwestern	40.00
58583	Arizona & Eastern	40.00

LIONEL 'TMCC' DIESELS

14532	/24510 Pennsylvania Sharknose ABA's	595.00
18130	/34/36 Santa Fe Warbonnet F3 ABBA's	745.00
18149	U.P. Die-Cast Veranda Turbine	895.00
18160	/38115 New York Central FT ABA's	375.00
18191	Western Pacific F-3 'AA' PWC	545.00
18226	General Electric Dash-9 ST 'O' size	250.00
18235	BNSF Dash-9 Pair	595.00
18245	/48 Pennsylvania PA Alco ABA's	495.00
18297	NYC SD-80MAC (sealed)	395.00
18322	Lackawanna (Maroon Top) Trainmaster	395.00
18340	Fairbanks Morse Scale Trainmaster Pair	595.00
18343	Pennsylvania #2332 Black GG-1	495.00
18351	New York Central S-1 Electric	395.00
18356	Penn Central Scale GG-1 (test-run)	795.00
18383	Great Northern EP-5 Electric PWC	295.00
18582	Seaboard NW-2 PWC (used)	275.00
18858	Centennial GP20 w/11849 Reefer 4pk.	275.00
24520	21/22 Alaska F-3 ABBA's (Scale)	995.00
24534	/38 Erie-Lackawanna F-3 ABBA's (Scale)	895.00
24579	/83 New York Central E7 ABA's	895.00
28244	N&W Hi-Nose C-420 (Scale)	395.00
28518	PWC Pennsylvania EP-5	295.00
38150	Platium Ghost F3s w/3 Passenger Cars	695.00
52315	Pennsylvania FM (Scale)	300.00
52321	Southern Pacific FM (Scale)	300.00

LIONEL HEAVYWEIGHT CARS

15521	/38/41 New York Central 7-Car Set	795.00
15526	Santa Fe 'The Chief' 4-Car Set	495.00
15576	C&O 'George Washington' 2pk.	250.00
15577	/81 New York Central 4-Car Set	395.00
25503	Santa Fe 4-Car Set	450.00
25504	Santa Fe 2-Car Addons	199.95
25507	Southern Pacific Daylight 2pk.	249.95
25519	PRR 'Liberty Limited' 2pk.	225.00
39042	Norfolk & Western 4-Car Set	295.00
39047	B&O Combine/Diner 2pk.	195.00
1927110	Southern Pacific 2pk. Coach #1	299.95
1927252	Penn Central B60 Baggage Car #7551	99.95
1927510	Missouri Pacific Sunshine Spl. 2pk #1	239.95
1927520	Missouri Pacific Sunshine Spl. 2pk #2	239.95
2127210	Penn Central B60 Baggage car #7630	99.95
2127290	NYC 60' Scale Baggage Car	99.95

LIONEL PASSENGER CAR/SETS

7220	to 25 Illinois Central 15" Alum. 6-Cars	395.00
9554	to 58,99 Chicago & Alton 6-Car Set	295.00
9569	to 75,7208 PRR 15" Alum. 8-Cars	695.00
9594	to 9598/7207 NYC 15" Alum. 6-Cars	395.00
15319	Santa Fe 'Surfliner' 15" Alum. 2pk.	179.95
16000	Pennsylvania 11" Complete 9-Car Set	295.00
16091	New York Central Baby Madison 4-Cars	159.95
18306	/10 Pennsylvania MU 4-Car Set	395.00
18506	/12 Canadian National Budd 4-Car Set	300.00
19061	Wabash Madison 4-Car Set	195.00
19074	Legends of Madison COMPLETE 10-cars	695.00
19096	Legends of Madison 2-Car Addons	175.00
19100	to 06 Amtrak 15" Alum. 7-Car Set	395.00
19109	Southern Pacific Madison Baggage	95.00

LIONEL PASSENGER CAR/SETS

19139	to 44 N&W 15" Alum. Smooth 6/Cars	395.00
19140	N&W 15" Alum. Combo (smooth)	45.00
19141	N&W 15" Alum. Diner (smooth)	55.00
19143	N&W 15"" Alum. Coach (smooth)	65.00
19171	/21780 NYC 15" Aluminum 6-Car set	450.00
19180	Santa Fe 'Surfliner' 15" Alum. 4-Car Set	295.00
19183	Great Northern 15" Full Vista 2pk.	195.00
19194	Kansas City Southern 15" Alum. 4-Car Set	395.00
21766	Atlantic Coast Line 15" Alum. 2car Addon	295.00
25412	B&O 18" Aluminum 2-Car addons	295.00
25450	/55/58 PRR Congressional 18" 7-Car Set	995.00
27912	Elizabeth #2445 Coach Car (Remake)	59.95
29003	Pennsylvania Madison 4-Car Set	225.00
29061	Pennsylvania Madison 4-Car Set	225.00
29110	B&O 18" Aluminum 4-Car Set	595.00
29191	/96/99 Milw. Hiawatha 18" Alum. 7-Cars	1495.00
35412	Lionel Lines Lenny Dean Madison Car	75.00
38428	/35490/99 Alaska RDC Budd 3-Car Set	375.00
39028	Archive Madison 3-Car Set	195.00
39118	Texas Spec. 15" Alum StationSound Diner	195.00
39154	PRR Congressional 15" Alum. 2-Car Addon	195.00
1927360	Long Island 21" Coaches 4-Car Set	649.95
2527720	Reading 15" Aluminum 4-Car Set	869.95

LIONEL MOTORIZED UNITS

8264	Canadian Pacific Snow Plow	95.0
8368	Alaska Vulcan Switcher	125.00
8379	Pennsylvania Fire Car	99.95
8578	New York Central Ballast Tamper	89.95
11988	NYC Firecar w/Instruction Car -TMCC	150.00
18400	Santa Fe Rotary Snow Plow	125.00
18406	Track Maintenance Car	59.95
18411	Canadian Pacific Fire Car	95.00
18419	Lionelville Trolley	89.95
18427	Pennsylvania Tie-Jector	49.95
18430	New York Central Crew Car	34.95
18447	PWC #68 Executive Inspection Car	109.95
18458	PWC #58 Rio Grande Snowplow	149.95
18464	#54 Ballast Tamper	125.00
18466	Union Pacific Rotary SnowPlow	159.95
18470	#52 Fire Car (red)	125.00
18474	#41 US Army Transportation Unit	164.95
18485	New York Central Gang Car	99.95

LIONEL MOTORIZED UNITS

18487	PWC #56 M&StL Unit w/TMCC	175.00
18583	PWC AEC Switcher	185.00
22637	Superstreets Quikrete Step Van	59.95
28413	Milwaukee Road SnowPlow	169.95
28414	#3360 Burro Crane	99.95
28423	Bethlehem Steel Switcher	189.95
52107	On-Track Orange Pickup	45.00
52108	On-Track Blue Step Van	45.00
2135090	B.N. TMCC Ballast Tamper	129.95
2135130	Southern Pacific TMCC Ballast Tamper	129.95
2235020	First Avenue Rapid Transit Trolley	94.95

LIONEL BOX SETS (NO T&T)

1070	Chessie 'Royal Ltd' Diesel Freight	295.00
1071	Seaboard 'Mid Atlantic' GP-9 Frt. Set	245.00
1160	Burlington 'Great Lakes' Diesel Freight	275.00
1260	N&W 'Continental' SD-24 Frt. Set	275.00
1450	Rio Grande F-3 Service Station (sealed)	395.00
1451	Erie-Lackawanna SD40 Frt. (sealed)	395.00
1502	NYC 'Yardchief' 0-4-0 Freight (sealed)	195.00
1552	B.N. SD-40 St 'O' Boxcar Set (sealed)	395.00
1579	Milwaukee Road F-3 Freight SSS	325.00
1585	Lionel 75th Anniversary Set	195.00
1867	Milwaukee Road SD-18 Frt. (used)	235.00
1971	Reading 'Quaker City' U36B Freight Set	295.00
1976	TCA Bicentennial U36B Passenger Set	195.00
11700	Conrail SD-40 Frt. Set	345.00
11704	Southern GP-9 Freight Set	225.00
11705	Chessie SD-40 Hopper Set (sealed)	350.00
11713	Santa Fe Dash 8-40B Freight Set (sealed)	395.00
11715	Lionel 90th Anniversary Set	225.00
11733	W.P. 'Feather River' Freight Set	295.00
11738	Soo Line GP-38 Diesel Freight Set	295.00
11744	NYC RS-3 Diesel Frt/Pass. Set	285.00
11749	Western Maryland Diesel Hopper Set	250.00
11918	Conrail GP-20 Merger Frt. Set	250.00
21753	Fire/Rescue Service Station Set	325.00
21758	Bethlehem Steel NW-2/Frt. SSS	395.00
21952	Service Station 2000 C-420 Diesel Frt	295.00
29122	Erie-Lacka. Phobe Snow Pass. Set-sealed	995.00
31799	Great Northern Steam Freight set	395.00
51000	Milwaukee Hiawatha Tinplate O Set	695.00
81023	CNJ 'Yard Boss' 0-4-0 Steam Freight	350.00

LIONEL POSTWAR CELEBRATION

19450	Barrel Ramp Car	30.00
19451	Wheel Car #6262	30.00
19487	Airplane Flatcar (Yellow over Black)	54.95
19490	Libby's Vat Car	30.00
19554	Lionel Lines Oper. Milk Car w/Stand	99.95
19557	Circus Stock Car	30.00
19688	Fort Knox Mint Car	54.95
19867	Poultry Dispatch Car	39.95
19877	ATSF Operating Barrel Car-Grey	49.95
19895	Santa Fe Operating Horse Car & Coral	125.00
27776	PRR & Central of Georgia Boxcar 2pk.	74.95
36702	Bosco Operating Milk Car w/Stand	125.00
36731	Motorized Aquarium Car #3435	79.95

MTH PREMIER FREIGHT CAR SETS

20-90003	Pennsylvania Assorted Frt. Car 6pk.	235.00
20-90006	Great Northern Assorted Frt. Car 6pk.	199.95
20-90010	BNSF Assorted Freight car 6pk.	225.00
20-90014	Burlington Northern Assorted Frt 6pk.	199.95
20-90015	Chesapeake & Ohio Assorted Frt 6pk.	199.95
20-90023	Union Pacific Assorted Freight Car 6pk.	245.00
20-90027	New Haven Assorted Freight Car 6pk.	225.00
20-90145	Union Pacific 4-Bay Coal Hopper 6pk.	229.95
20-90781	Union Pacific Flatcar w/Pipe Load 6pk.	299.95
20-92214	US Army Flats w/6x6 Tank Trucks 4pk	329.95
20-92283	Army-Desert Flats-M270 Launchers 4pk	349.95
20-92285	Army (Desert) Flats w/M60 Tanks 4pk	549.95
20-97507	DM&IR Ore Car 6-pack	209.95

LIONEL AMERICAN FLYER S-GAUGE

8458	Southern GP-7 w/6 Southern Frt. Cars	250.00
42599	Youngstown Steel Baldwin Switcher	195.00
47900	/03/09 D&H SL Passenger 6-Car Set	395.00
48013	Conrail GP-7 Diesel	150.00
48010	Milwaukee Road EP-5	175.00
48014	Northern Pacific GP-9 Diesel	175.00
48017	Nickel Plate Road GP-7 Power/Dummy	245.00
48019	Southern Pacific GP-20 Diesel	150.00
48039	B&O Dockside Switcher	99.95
48042	Southern Light Mikado Loco w/TMCC	450.00
48049	Southern Pacific SD-9 Diesel	195.00
48052	Erie Pacific 4-6-2 Locomotive w/TMCC	495.00
48075	New Haven EP-5 Electric	245.00
48100	Wabash PA Alco 'AA' w/6 Freight Cars	395.00
48102	Chesapeake & Ohio Alco 'AA'	295.00
48116	Northern Pacific Alco PB-1 Dummy	75.00
48118	Missouri Pacific Alco PB-1 w/RS	145.00
48119	Union Pacific Alco PB-1 w/Railsounds	145.00
48122	Western Pacific Alco PB-1 w/Railsounds	125.00
48128	Silver Flash Alco PB-1 Dummy	95.00
48129	Silver Flash Alco PA-1 Dummy	145.00
48130	Santa Fe Warbonnet PA-1 Alco 'AA'	350.00
48144	Pennsylvania Baldwin Switcher	195.00
48165	M&StL Baldwin Switcher	195.00
48942	Silver Flash Vista Dome Car	49.95
48943	New Haven Vista Dome Car	49.95
48978	/83 U.P. Heavyweight Pass. 6-Car Set	495.00
49600	U.P. Pony Express Passenger Set	395.00
49601	Missouri Pacific Passenger Set	395.00
49605	New Haven Passenger 3-Car Set	175.00
49606	Silver Flash Passenger Set	450.00
49614	PRR PA Alco Passenger Boxed Set	595.00
49615	Chessie SD-9 Diesel Frt. Boxed Set	495.00
49622	American Freedom Alco Pass. Set	595.00
49624	Defender 1959 (Remake) Set #20525	450.00
49626	Ringling Brothers Circus Set	545.00
2019010	BAR FreightSounds Boxcar	69.95
2019020	TP&W FreightSounds Boxcar	69.95
2019040	Frisco FreightSounds Boxcar	69.95
2119120	Senate Beer Reefer Car	44.95

AMERICAN FLYER 'S' ACCESSORIES

2321	Operating Sawmill	125.00
49086	Telephone Poles 6-pack	29.95
49806	Operating Sawmill	125.00
49807	#752 Seaboard Coaling Tower	145.00
49810	Log Loader	159.95
49812	#755 Talking Station	79.95
49813	#789 Baggage Smasher	59.95
49814	#774 Floodlight Tower	59.95
49819	#583a Electromagnetic Crane	199.95
49839	#792 Railroad Terminal Building	99.95

www.grzyboskitrains.com

YOUR PHOTOS



▲ Bruce Moffat's Standard gauge layout

Specialization describes the approach adopted by the majority of toy train hobbyists. But longtime members of the collecting community, a group that includes Bruce Moffat, who joined the Train Collectors Association back in 1977, often chase after vintage models made by different manufacturers during one or maybe more eras of production. Bruce submitted this photograph to show exactly what he does on a display measuring 7½ x 13 feet at his home in Chicago. The dominant train is an American Flyer Wide Gauge President's Special, so striking in blue. Behind it Bruce has set up on 2-inch gauge track a Voltamp No. 2200 steam locomotive and tender from around 1907. It's pulling a Voltamp passenger car past an Ives No. 116 Union Station, which was cataloged from 1924 to 1928.



▲ Joseph Tillman's O gauge layout

No doubt about it — the bustling scene that Joseph Tillman has photographed on his O gauge railroad in Ave Maria, Fla., could easily have been done 70 years ago in a basement or an attic in Wisconsin, New Jersey, or Maine. The tubular track, the vintage accessories, and the Plasticville U.S.A. structures remind many of us of the layouts we built with our dads and moms back when Lionel and American Flyer ruled the world of toy trains. Joe's Lionel Santa Fe F3s have been going strong since the 1950s, just like the No. 60 Lionelville Trolley.

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

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

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

▶ Doug Kann's S gauge layout

Two American Flyer trains, each pulled by a Reading 4-4-2 Atlantic from the postwar era, prepare to pass each other on adjacent main lines on a day in July about 70 years ago. The nostalgic scene takes place on the 9 x 16-foot S gauge railroad Doug Kann has constructed at his home in East Petersburg, Pa. Doug, who snapped this neat picture, has filled the main town on his layout with many of the colorful residential, commercial, and civic buildings in the Plasticville U.S.A. line. You may also notice one or two A.C. Gilbert Co. accessories.


HARDWARE PLASTICVILLE PHARMACY
SuperMarket
PLASTICVILLE
TELEPHONE
TAXI
60
LIONELVILLE RAPID TRANSIT


AMERICAN FLYER
RAIL ROAD CROSSING



▲ Jim Gaylord's O gauge model railroad

Late in the afternoon decades in the past, members of a family finishing chores in their cabin pause to watch a Lehigh Valley Alco RS3 road diesel lead a train over the bridge below. Nearby, a Nickel Plate Road 2-8-4 Berkshire steamer emerges from a tunnel. All the action takes place on the 5 x 8-foot O gauge railroad that's been the focus of Jim Gaylord's leisure hours since the time a few years ago that his wife presented him with his first toy train. Now, this resident of Rochester, N.Y., admits, "I'm hooked on the hobby!" Jim has filled his roster with LionChief Plus 2.0 and Legacy motive power, which runs over his network of FasTrack.



▲ Stephen Koferl's O gauge layout

Toy train aficionados and railfans can spend many hours debating which fallen flag had the most magnificent paint scheme for its diesels and streamlined passenger cars. Ask O gauge modeler Stephen Koferl for his top choice, and he'll direct your attention to the MTH No. 20-2220 Great Northern EMD F3 units shown strutting their finest stuff on his 14 x 20-foot three-rail display. The Premier line locomotives look absolutely stunning as they race out of a double-track tunnel. Steve handled all aspects of construction of his layout in Hauppauge, N.Y., and took this photo. His operation relies on the command-control systems developed by Lionel and MTH.

◀ Nathan Leclerc's O gauge layout

Once upon a time, the Boston & Albany RR operated a branch line that served various industries in Chicopee, Mass. Maybe that noble heritage is the reason O gauge enthusiast Nathan Leclerc, who makes his home in Chicopee, has posed this K-Line 4-6-6T steam engine and tender on his three-rail layout. Unfamiliar with the locomotive? The 4-6-6T was a specialized tank engine designed by Alco in 1928 for the Boston & Albany. Nathan photographed the powerful steamer right after it passed a green signal on the northbound main line. It's ready to fly down the track!



▲ David Smith's O gauge layout

David Smith realized he had a problem when his collection of Marx trains got a little too big. You see, he already had a permanent layout for his many Lionel models and didn't think he had enough space for a railroad for his Marx trains and accessories. The answer, this resourceful resident of Dearborn, Mich., concluded was, as he said, "to build a 4 x 5-foot foldable/storable Marx layout that I can bring out and set up on a table whenever the urge to see and run Marx hits me." And that's what happened the day David took this photo of his Nos. 897 steam engine and tender plus passenger cars dashing out of this cool No. 392 tunnel toward a No. 2959 Girard Whistling Station. David pointed out the Colber No. 101 Gate Man that, he insists, fits nicely with the lithographed Marx pieces. "I love the toy-like look of Marx trains," David declares. "They bring a smile to my face whenever I run them."

NEWS BITS

Round 2 acquires Lionel, LLC

Round 2, a collectibles company and the portfolio company of Praesidian Capital, announced it has acquired Lionel, LLC. A press release sent to *Classic Toy Trains* stated the acquisition, which closed on March 2, will create the Lionel Brands Group.

The deal unites two category leaders, giving the newly formed company the ability to strengthen its investment in product development while enhancing what already works best for each brand. The leadership and product teams behind both brands will remain in place.

Round 2 and Lionel bring complementary products and capabilities, additional opportunities in licensing, and increased ability to show up as an even more important partner to key retailers.

Richard Barry, CEO of the Lionel Brands Group, said, "Lionel is one of the most beloved and historic names in American collecting, with a history of craftsmanship that deserves thoughtful stewardship. We're proud to be the custodians of this iconic, fan-first brand as we combine it with Round 2's fan-first portfolio to invest in new products, better storytelling, and more ways to show up for fans and collectors."

Howard Hitchcock, President and Chief Operating Officer of the Lionel Brands Group, added, "Lionel has always been about that train-under-the-tree magic, and that same spirit shows up everywhere the brand lives, from the rails to the racetrack. This next stop on the brand's journey will keep the heart of the brand intact and will put more support behind the people building it. We're going to protect what fans and collectors love and give them even more reasons to climb aboard for what's next."

Jason Drattell, Praesidian Capital Founder and Managing Partner, said, "True heritage like Lionel's is both rare and powerful. Combining the strength of Lionel's legacy with Round 2's fan-favorite products allows us to build a stronger platform for the communities that have kept these brands for generations while increasing our ability to invest in long-term growth."

Changes to Sunset Models

Sunset Models' production will be handled by Third & Townsend Models LLC. In an email sent to customers, Sunset Models Inc. CEO Scott Mann stated, "Our models [will be] produced by Jay [Escamilla], under the Sunset Models/3rd Rail/Golden Gate Depot banners."

Moving the model production, according to the email, is a five-year lease-to-own process. "Everyone is excited about the new blood in the business," said Mann.

The firm announced a new address: 231 Market Place PMB 223, San Ramon, CA 94583. All Sunset Models' parts can be found at Get3RParts.com.

When asked what customers might notice about the changes, Third & Townsend Models' owner Jay Escamilla answered, "We're expanding production, increasing consistency, and bringing more projects to life. The growth of our social media presence has introduced a new generation of modelers to our work. That expanded audience gives us the confidence to invest in more models — including smaller, specialized runs that might not have been possible before."

Seeking S gauge layout owners

CTT is looking for S gauge layouts to feature in future issues of the magazine. For consideration, please email two or three snapshots, along with a paragraph describing your layout (size, theme, and special features) to editor@classictoytrains.com

Contributors needed

We're looking for readers interesting in submitting price information for the 2028 edition of *Greenberg's Lionel Pocket Price Guide.* You'll receive a small honorarium and a copy of the book as payment. If interested, email editor@classictoytrains.com. Thank you for making the price guide a valuable tool!

All Alco: *Alco Locomotives Volume 3: General Products Catalog* is a 72-page softcover book from the Manufacturers' Archive Series from SilverLake Images LLC. The reproduction Alco catalog includes information on parts for locomotives (trucks, fire doors, valves, and other fittings), three-cylinder locomotives, and rotary snowplows, among other items. In addition, the book includes a look at McIntosh & Seymour Corp. diesel locomotives, Heat Transfer Products Inc., and Ames Pump Co. **Price: $35.** Published by SilverLake Images LLC, the book is available from Ron's Books, 914-967-7541, ronsbooks.com

Ready reference: *Classic Toy Trains* readers can download a free 2025 index PDF from our website. It contains listings of all the articles, departments, and subject categories from the four issues published in 2025. Most feature material has been indexed three or more times: the title under which it was published, the author's last name, and its subject. Find the index at trains.com/ctt/magazine/index


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Spring Summer Fall Winter

USING THE INDEX: Most feature material has been indexed three or more times: by the title under which it was published; under the author's last name; and by subject, usually falling under one or more of the CTT subject categories.
An asterisk (*) preceding an entry indicates a feature by its published title.

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Accessories; Collections/operators; Construction & maintenance; Cover photos; Historical; How-to articles; Layouts; Manufacturers; Nostalgia; Obituaries; Track plans; Wiring

CTT DEPARTMENTS
Collectible Classics; Editor's Desk; Photo Album; Product News; Product Reviews; Questions & Answers; Tips & Techniques; Weekend Workshop

ACCESSORIES

COLLECTIBLE CLASSICS WITH ROGER CARP

COLLECTORS AND OPERATORS

Happy 250th birthday, America!

In celebration of this notable anniversary, we present a selection of patriotic products.



Hail to the chief: Trainworld, 751 McDonald Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11218, offers a custom-run MTH modern 50-foot boxcar as part of the RailKing line. The O gauge model will be available in two numbers and feature O-31 operation (No. 30-71298 shown). Expected delivery in July 2026. **Website:** trainworld.com



Spirit of America: Lionel, 6301 Performance Dr., Concord, NC 28027, is selling a Spirit of America LionChief General Electric Dash-8 diesel locomotive (No. 2645050). The O gauge diesel locomotive features Bluetooth, Lionel Voice Control, and O-31 operation. **Price:** $289.99. **Website:** lionel.com



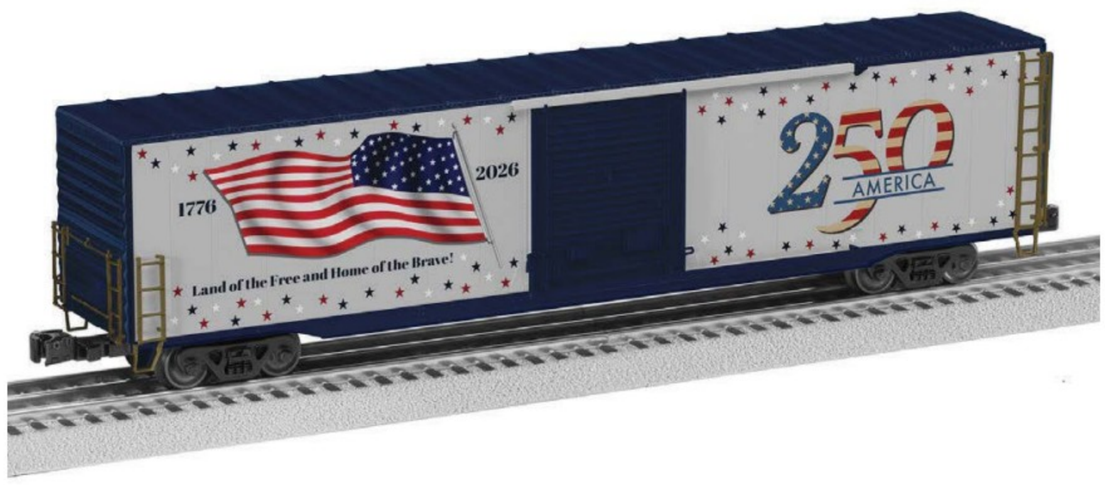
Collector Series: Atlas Model Railroad Co. Inc., 378 Florence Ave., Hillside, NJ 07205, has several PS-1 40-foot boxcars as part of a Limited Edition Collectors Series. Each O gauge model has historically accurate paint schemes and features O-31 operation (No. 3009050 shown). **Price:** $109.95. **Website:** shop.atlasrr.com



Ol' 1776: Atlas Model Railroad Co. Inc., 378 Florence Ave., Hillside, NJ 07205, has announced a patriotic-themed EMD SD40-2 diesel locomotive as part of the Premier line. The O gauge Wheeling & Lake Erie Ry. No. 1776 has red/white/blue graphics (No. 30138695) and features Proto-Sound 3.0, cab figures, operating knuckle couplers, and O-31 operation. **Price:** $749.95. **Website:** shop.atlasrr.com



Historic structure: Menards offers an O scale Ronald Reagan's Boyhood Home (No. 275-9574). The structure includes LED lighting and scenic details, including figures of Ronald and Nancy Reagan. Accessory lighting requires power from Menard's 4.5-volt power supply, sold separately (Nos. 279-4061/4361, 4060/4362, or 4050). **Price:** $100. **Website:** menards.com/trains



Fly the flag: Lionel, 6301 Performance Dr., Concord, NC 28027, has introduced America 250 Lighted Flag 60-foot Boxcar (No. 2626010). The O gauge model features LED illumination and O-31 operation. **Price:** $209.99. **Website:** lionel.com

Gritty details: Brennan's Model Railroading is selling Street Schmutz, a gray powdery grit designed for use on your O or S gauge layout. The 2-ounce bag will add details to your curbs and intersections, sidewalks and pavement, cobblestones, and elsewhere. **Price:** $6.95. **Website:** brennansmodelrr.com





Multi-purpose mover: MTH Electric Trains, 7393 Washington Blvd. Ste. 101, Elkridge, MD 21075, has announced an EMD MP15 diesel locomotive as part of the RailKing line. The O gauge locomotive features Proto-Sound 3.0, onboard DCC/DCS decoder, and O-31 operation (No. 30-21379 shown). Expected delivery in June 2026. **Price:** $469.95. **Website:** mthtrains.com



On the move: CatsPaw Innovations LLC, 1255 Coan Dr., Locust Grove, GA 30248, has a number of new S scale figures, including Adult Tricycle with Rider, Cats in Action Poses, Painter on Ladder, and more. See the firm's online store for prices and ordering information: catzpawstore.myshopify.com



Barrel of details: GearedSteamShop is selling O gauge barrels on pallets (1:48 scale). Each set is made from plastic and includes four pallets and 16 barrels in various colors. **Price:** $12.95. **Website:** etsy.com/shop/GearedSteamShops



Cool Consolidation: Atlas Model Railroad Co. Inc., 378 Florence Ave., Hillside, NJ 07205, has released a 2-8-0 Consolidation steam engine and tender as part of the Premier line. The O gauge locomotive features Proto-Sound 3.0, synchronized puffing ProtoSmoke system, O-36 operation, and more (No. 30138808 shown). **Price:** $879.95. **Website:** shop.atlasrr.com

FM diesels: *Fairbanks-Morse Locomotives Volume 2* is an 86-page softcover book covering diesel locomotives built by the manufacturer once based in Beloit, Wis. The book, which sells for $35, is part of the Manufacturers' Archive Series and has information on H10-44 switchers, H16-44 and H20-44 road diesels, C-Liners, and more. Published by SilverLake Images LLC, it's available from Ron's Books, 914-967-7541, ronsbooks.com

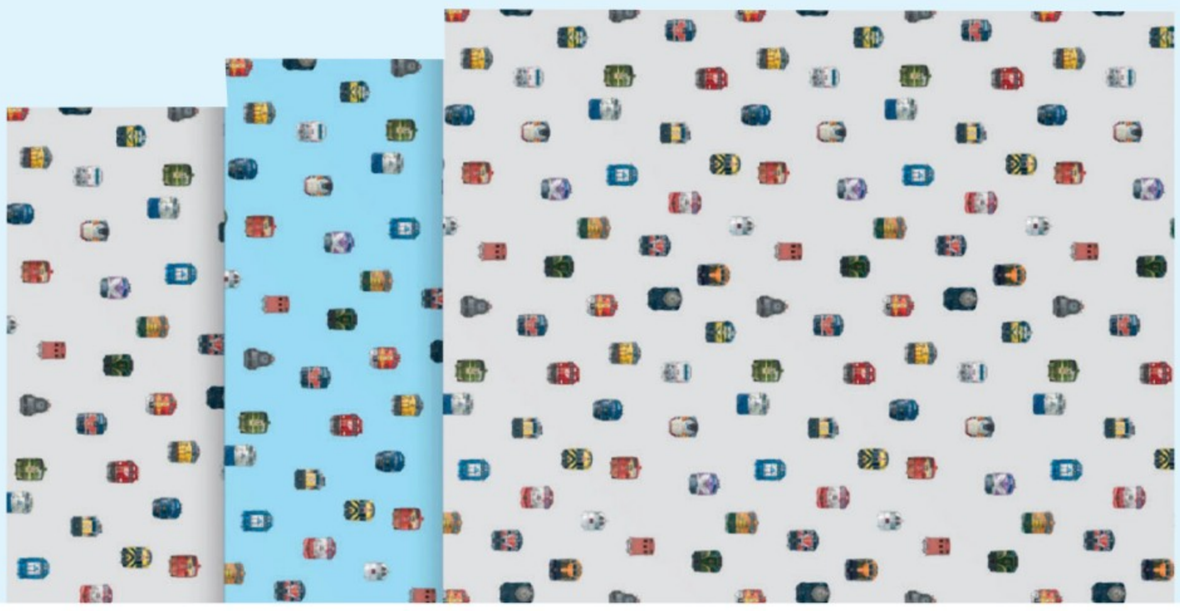


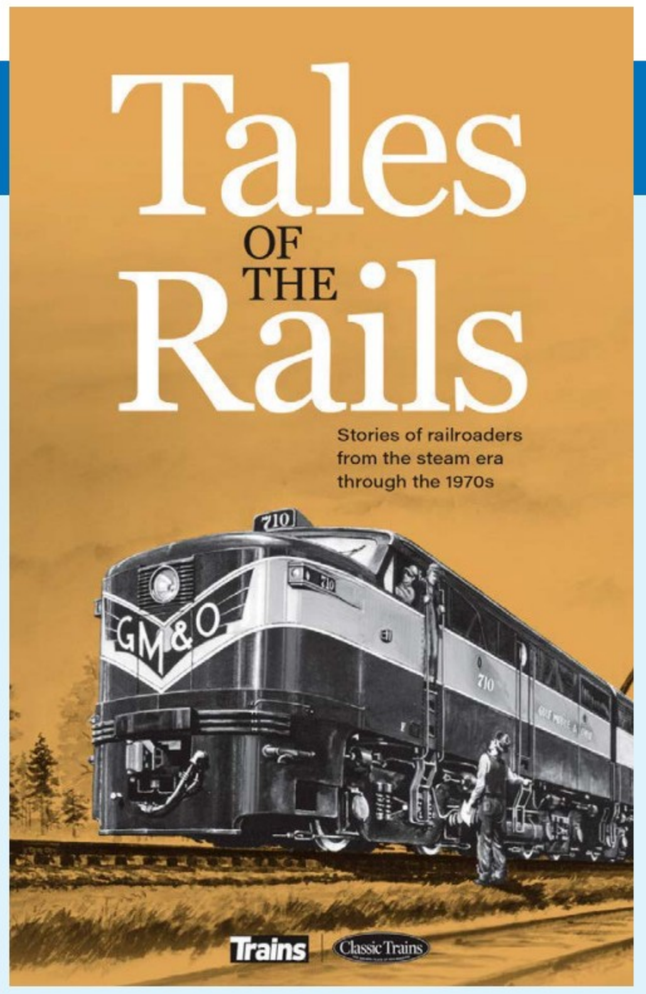
Fix 'em up: Menards is selling the Engine Maintenance Facility (No. 275-9579). The O gauge structure features LED lighting, customizable signage, figures, and more. **Price:** $89.99. **Website:** menards.com/trains

SIP IN STYLE: Show your love for your favorite toy train magazine with our *Classic Toy Trains* mug. The ceramic mug is available in either 11- or 15-ounce sizes and is dishwasher and microwave safe. **Price: 11 oz., $15; 15 oz., $16.50**



WRAPPED UP: Trains.com is selling custom-designed wrapping paper. These high-quality matte sheets measure 28.75" x 19.75" and are printed with locomotive noses. **Price: $15 for three sheets.**





TRUE TALES: Every rail enthusiast has imagined climbing into the cab of a steam locomotive and pulling open the throttle or sitting at a dispatcher's console as trains race across a busy main line. With *Tales of the Rails*, you can come closer than ever before! This softcover book from Firecrown Media brings together 46 first-hand accounts from professional railroaders sharing stories about their jobs. Taken from the pages of *Trains* and *Classic Trains* magazines, these stories span the age of steam into the 1970s. **Price: $27.99.**



Connector cable: MTH Electric Trains, 7393 Washington Blvd. Ste. 101, Elkridge, MD 21075, offers a WTIU-TMCC-Legacy Connector Cable (No. 50-1042). The cable will connect the DCS WTIU system to the Lionel Command Base, the Lionel Legacy Command Base, or the Lionel Base3. If you wish to operate Lionel locomotives in command mode with the Legacy Command Base, you'll also need the Lionel SER2 and PDI cable. **Price:** $29.95. **Website:** mthtrains.com



Able adapter: MTH Electric Trains, 7393 Washington Blvd. Ste. 101, Elkridge, MD 21075, has a WTIU/DCS Remote Adapter Cable (No. 50-1041). The cable will connect your DCS handheld remotes (Nos. 50-1002, -1038 or -1001) to the WTIU. **Price:** $29.95. **Website:** mthtrains.com

BY ROGER CARP



Marx's No. 1950 GAEX boxcar

Attractive O gauge model that beat Lionel to the punch

To appreciate the place of the Marx No. 1950 GAEX boxcar in the history of postwar toy trains, we must place it in a larger context, one dominated by the Lionel Corp. during that era. Only by looking at what the leader in the field was doing in the 1950s can O gauge fans see why the green Marx freight car was more than just a pretty face on three rails.

BETTER BOXCARS

In the years after World War II, Lionel had developed a few plastic models of boxcars that looked like toys. The Nos. 2454 and 6454 cars were too short to be considered anywhere close to scale replicas.

That shortcoming wouldn't have mattered to O gauge modelers except that makers of O scale and HO scale trains were introducing rolling stock built to scale dimensions. Those replicas, such as the Athearn Rock Island boxcar used as a Collectible Classic in the Summer 2024 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*, were capturing the eye-catching schemes being adopted by railroads in the late 1940s. As a result, Lionel seemed to be falling behind.

Engineers at Lionel, paying attention to what was going on in the domestic market for toy and model trains, started to lay the groundwork for the near-scale boxcars the company would bring out in 1953. At the same time, decision makers at American Model Toys, an up-and-coming O gauge manufacturer in Indiana, were planning production of near-scale cars.

MARX BOXCARS

Ironically, it was Louis Marx & Co., the prominent maker of toys — including O gauge trains — that brought a model of a modern boxcar to the American market first. In 1950, Marx offered the first of its tinplated and lithographed 3/16-inch scale boxcars. The firm also brought out shorter 7-inch-long metal boxcars and, later in the 1950s, injection-molded plastic boxcars.

Among the finest of Marx's longer metal boxcars were models marked for the New York Central Pacemaker and the Pennsylvania Railroad Merchandise Service. The latter inspired an entry for the less-expensive 7-inch line featured in sets a Bangor & Aroostook State of Maine car.

Two Marx 3/16-inch boxcars stood out because they hit the market first and modeled contemporary paint schemes Lionel never duplicated. The Nos. 1950 GAEX in dark green with yellow highlights and 9100 Union Pacific Challenger Merchandise Service in red with black ends and roof definitely stood out.

WINNING THE RACE

The 1950 GAEX boxcar merits attention and respect. Why? Because it deservedly can be lauded as the first specialized boxcar made by a manufacturer associated with producing and marketing toy trains in the postwar era.

Louis Marx & Co. beat everyone in the domestic toy train field when it introduced in 1950 a terrific model of the "Shippers Delight Boxcar" created by GAEX (short for the newly formed General American – Evans Company). That Chicago-based firm owned a pool of specially designed boxcars it leased to railroads so they could offer safe and fast freight service to a range of customers.

Marx kept the 1950 GAEX boxcar in its cataloged lineup for a few more years. That handsome O gauge freight car failed to win suitors at either AMT or Lionel.

However, in 1953, the American Flyer roster of S gauge trains made by the A.C. Gilbert Co. featured two renditions of a GAEX boxcar, both done in the distinctive shade of green with the yellow markings. The No. 622 came equipped with the soon-to-be-obsolete link couplers, and the No. 922 featured Flyer's brand-new knuckle couplers. At least Gilbert was paying attention to what Marx was doing. CTT



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Empire in a spare room



1 A Lionel treasure from the postwar era, Don's classic No. 773 New York Central 4-6-4 Hudson hardly breaks a sweat when rushing out of the tunnel on the mountain he made.

DON WINSLOW SHARES SPACE FOR HIS GREAT O GAUGE LAYOUT

STORY BY ROGER CARP // PHOTOS BY CARL TYLER AND DONALD WINSLOW

Let's perform a brief experiment. Before you read any further, please take a good look at each of the close-up photos Don Winslow and his friend Carl Tyler took of his O gauge layout. Take your time and study the different scenes.

Okay, now that you're back, ponder this question: What do you think are the overall dimensions of Don's model railroad?

You may find it next to impossible to answer, based solely on the excellence of the modeling shown in the great pictures snapped by Don and Carl.

Now, turn to the overall shot of Don's layout Carl submitted for this article. Try not to look at the information in the adjacent "At a glance" sidebar, simply because the dimensions are specified there.

What's your answer at this point? Are you guessing the layout is 10 x 20 feet? Do you believe it's even bigger?

Well, here's the amazing fact, one attesting to Don's outstanding skills as a designer and builder. His three-rail "empire" measures only 6¼ x 12 feet.

You read that correctly. You're admiring a beautiful O gauge railroad consisting of 75 square feet. And it runs like a Swiss clock. Time to learn more about Don's wizardry, particularly if you also have only a spare bedroom for your layout.



Don and Mary Winslow moved into their current home not long before their son, David, was born. On a recent Christmas, David gave his father that Lionel No. 1934011 BNSF General Electric ET44AC diesel run with LionChief Plus 2.0.



2 **The rail action Don Winslow has packed into 75 square feet is remarkable. Yet the design of the O gauge layout in his beautiful home as well as the superbly developed scenes on the display never cause them to feel crowded.**

FACING CHALLENGES

Don is too circumspect to reveal how big an O gauge layout he might have developed had the real estate been available to him when his wife, Mary, and he moved into their home more than 25 years ago, right around the time their son, David, was born. We might be presenting a three-rail empire the size of a football field!

Don understood that designing a compact layout for O gauge trains represented a challenge. Other than costing less to build and taking less time to finish than larger model railroads, a compact layout may end up being a more complex project if you want it to be attractive and fulfilling.

As you might imagine, the temptation when there's less than 100 square feet at your disposal will always be to throw caution to the wind and pack it with lots of main lines to run as many trains as possible plus sidings to handle lots of operating cars and accessories.

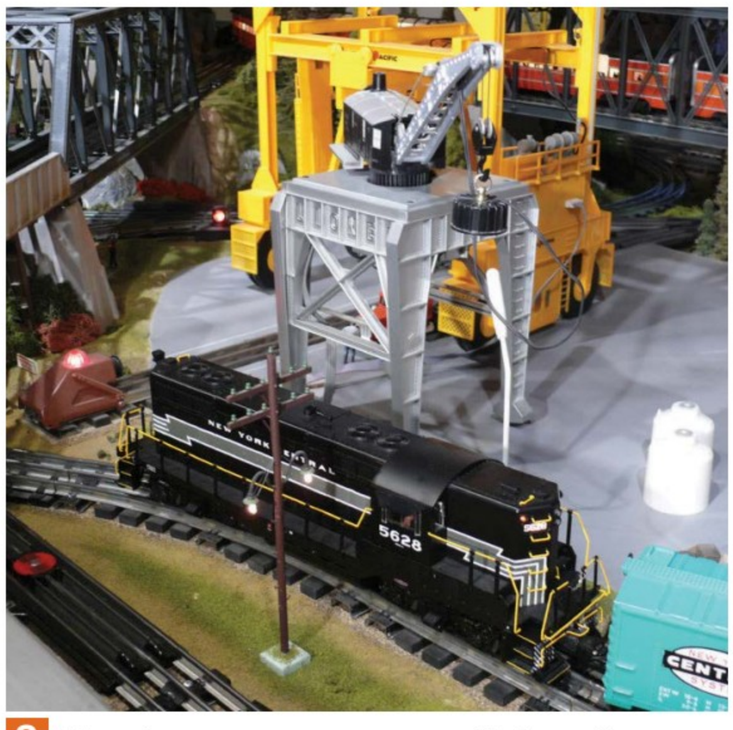
Fortunately, Don got his urge to expand under control. Many years spent modeling in HO scale had reinforced the wisdom of less being more.

Instead, Don intended to put every lesson he had learned from decades on the scale side of the hobby into practice. His experience would guide him as he designed and constructed an O gauge layout that, as the photos prove, never looks crowded or feels cramped.

AN ART GALLERY

Don spent years exploring HO modeling because he had been introduced to the hobby with trains of that size. For Christmas 1957, his parents presented him with a Marklin No. 3203 German "goods train," headed by a 2-6-0 steam engine. The European locomotive pulled three cars.

Although Don was familiar with Lionel O gauge trains from watching friends run the larger models, he liked his HO set. Better yet, his father built a layout for the German train on a sheet of plywood. More track and rolling stock, always from Marklin, came Don's way for many years.



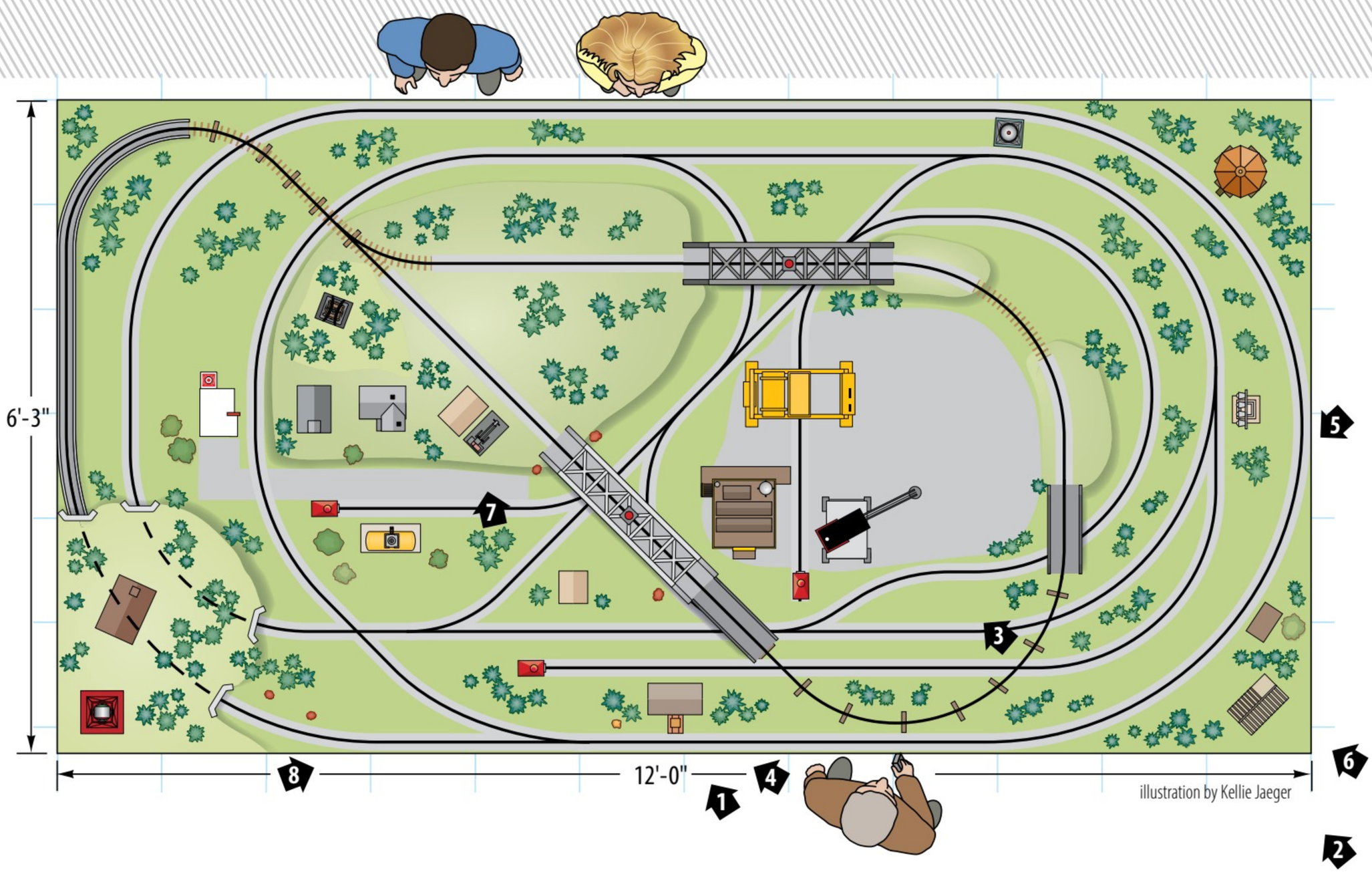
3 **Massive cranes are essential workers on Don's layout. They handle scrap metal as well as trailers. The No. 28561 New York Central GP7 feeds the loads to them.**

Don understood what was available to him and learned to enjoy it. As an adolescent in the 1960s, he faithfully read *Model Railroader*. He learned about assembling L-girder benchwork and fashioning miniature landforms using screen wire nailed to pieces of wood and then covering that solid foundation with papier-mâché.

The HO layout Don built eventually featured rudimentary landscapes amid which he added structures to create thoughtful scenes for his trains to traverse and serve. He realized how each area could take on a life and appeal of its own.

What Don discerned is that a layout ought to simulate an art gallery. Just as patrons move through an exhibition slowly, savoring each painting or piece of sculpture, so ought viewers of an HO, S, or O gauge display be able to focus while investigating particular sights without having their vision or perspective interrupted by an excess of track or scenery or railroad activity.

Whether empty space or minimal landscaping serves to separate scenes on a layout, regardless of its overall dimensions, there need to be spots where not very much can be gazed upon. By following such a thoughtful approach, a builder causes his or her layout to seem bigger and more interesting. Viewers spend more time studying notable scenes and leave remembering more of what they've seen.



Some of Don's most enjoyable times occur when he powers up a train or two just to stand by and watch the action on his 6¼ x 12-foot O gauge layout. The numbered arrows correspond to the numbers in each of the captioned photos in this exclusive article.



4 A No. 2322 Virginian Ry. Train Master dwarfs the speeder being pushed into a Berkshire Valley shed. The diesel's roar causes the men and raccoons to freeze.

AT A GLANCE

Don Winslow's O gauge layout

Dimensions: 6¼ x 12 feet

Track and switches: Lionel (diameters range from 31 to 72 inches)

Motive power: Lionel (postwar, modern)

Rolling stock: Lionel (postwar, modern)

Controls: Lionel PowerHouse 180-watt power supply (2), PowerHouse 135-watt brick (2), ZW transformer with Lionel TrainMaster Command Control and Legacy

Accessories: Lionel (postwar, modern)

Structures: Berkshire Valley, Lionel, Plasticville U.S.A.

Vehicles: Lionel

Figures: Arttista, Lionel

DONE PERFECTLY

There isn't anything revolutionary about the modeling philosophy outlined in the previous paragraphs. Most readers of CTT could describe it, and many of you may have designed your home layout following the same precepts, whether it could be considered compact or humongous.

Thinking about Don's approach further, it can be traced back to what members of the display departments at both the Lionel Corp. and the A.C. Gilbert Co. endorsed many decades ago. The small O or S gauge layouts they crafted for retail accounts left their mark on generations of youngsters precisely because their minimal design promised action and pleasure without overwhelming onlookers.

Don has added wonderfully to that heritage. He has as well walked in the footsteps of O gauge pioneer Frank Ellison in creating individualized scenes that provide dramatic spots for his postwar and modern locomotives and freight cars.



5 **The Southern Pacific dominates Don Winslow's roster and with good reason. This Lionel No. 38079 GS-2 4-8-4 alternates between passenger and freight trains.**



6 **The crew working on the Plasticville house may miss the Lionel No. 81453 Pennsylvania RR F3 A-A diesels from the Neil Young Signature Line of Legacy-equipped models.**

Knowledge and experience blended as Don designed his three-rail layout. He returned to L-girder benchwork for its sturdy foundation, opting for 4 x 4 lumber for the legs and 1 x 4 pieces for the joists.

Don erected the platform 40 inches off the floor. Then he added an elevated section 6 inches higher. Letting trains ascend and dip back to the main level seems to extend their journey and increase interest.

Without bragging, Don recommends at this juncture paying attention to the accompanying track plan. Anyone contemplating their next layout may find plenty to emulate there, especially where less than 100 square feet is available.

BACK AND FORTH

Don zigzagged between paying homage to the past and highlighting the present. His respect for the traditions of O gauge modeling led him to use tubular track. "I chose old straights and curves," he said, "for the nostalgic look they give. It complements the postwar and modern trains I run."

The same point of view explained Don choosing Lionel's remote-control turnouts. He bought updated versions of postwar items and noted they injected flexibility into his design. Since being installed, the switches have performed reliably, enabling him to run trains without derailments.

Where Don spurned tradition to embrace innovation involved operation. Command control, specifically the Train-Master Command Control system from Lionel, intrigued him from the moment he heard about it. Ignoring it in favor of conventional modes made no sense to him, and he's never regretted his decision.

"Looking back," Don reminisces, "TMCC was what attracted me to O gauge modeling back in the 1990s when Lionel introduced it. I especially like the robust and realistic sound effects. These days, I'm enjoying the ins and outs of the Legacy system. One of the advantages of what Lionel has developed is that it lets me switch to conventional control, if that's how I want to run my older engines."

An appreciation of how technical innovations are reshaping the hobby led Don to adopt the improvements derived from TMCC. For example, he regularly runs trains from the LionChief segment of the Lionel catalog, using its universal controller. Engines with Bluetooth hardware have also found a home with Don.

HYBRID SCENERY

With a smile, Don makes a very casual and sincere confession: "I tend to be old-school with so much about my layout." Even with scenery? "My mentor when it came time to figure out how to develop the landscapes was Bill McClanahan. He literally wrote the book I use."

Yep, a generation or two before Dave Frary and Dennis Brennan were helping shape how scale modelers created mountains, waterways, and forests, the genial, pipe-smoking McClanahan was outlining fundamental techniques and tips on scenery. Thousands of hobbyists clung to the nuggets of advice he shared.

McClanahan recommended making all sorts of landforms by first nailing chicken wire to pieces of wood secured to the framework. Then he explained how you bent and shaped the pliable screening to get the contours desired, after which you put on wads of crumpled newspaper for the final shape. Next, the hobby's first guru of landscaping advised draping on papier-mâché to get a hard shell.

Don proved to be a dedicated disciple of McClanahan, at least through the stage of using wood, wire, and newspaper. From

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there, he broadened his approach until it yielded a hybrid between past wisdom and contemporary insights. Meaning, he relied more on plaster-infused cloth and Hydrocal to finish the surfaces. Where necessary, he opted for rock molds.

Painting with solid colors and brushing lightly over certain areas caused the white patches on the scenery surface to vanish. Earth tones, especially tan, worked superbly. Lightly brushing paints over other sites accentuated crevices and crags. Before the commercial brands of latex had dried, Don sprinkled on different hues and textures of the blended turf marketed by Woodland Scenics.

Flat gray latex household paint served to make rock faces come alive. The contrast between stark cliffs and lush valleys enhanced the great appearance of the railroad while giving viewers yet another reason to linger before looking ahead.

GOOD TIMES REIGN

The warm and attractive look of the landscapes pretty much parallels what Don sought to achieve in settled areas. Namely, towns and their structures reflect prosperous times. There was no interest in modeling "urban decay."



7 These O gauge Western Pacific diesels hold a special place in Don's heart. The family of his good friend, the late Bruce Dollinger, presented them to him, eager to see the classic F3 units keep operating.

Commercial and residential buildings from the Berkshire Valley, Lionel, and Plasticville lines consequently look strong and sturdy. Don refuses to leave them in pristine condition. Instead, he weathers every structure he owns, albeit in a light and polite manner.

"I tend to give everything some subtle discoloration around the roof," Don begins. "In addition, I'm likely to grab my airbrush to add a gentle blast or spray of rusty or grimy paint over the walls and roof." He finishes by reducing the shine of the plastic features with Testor's Dullcote.

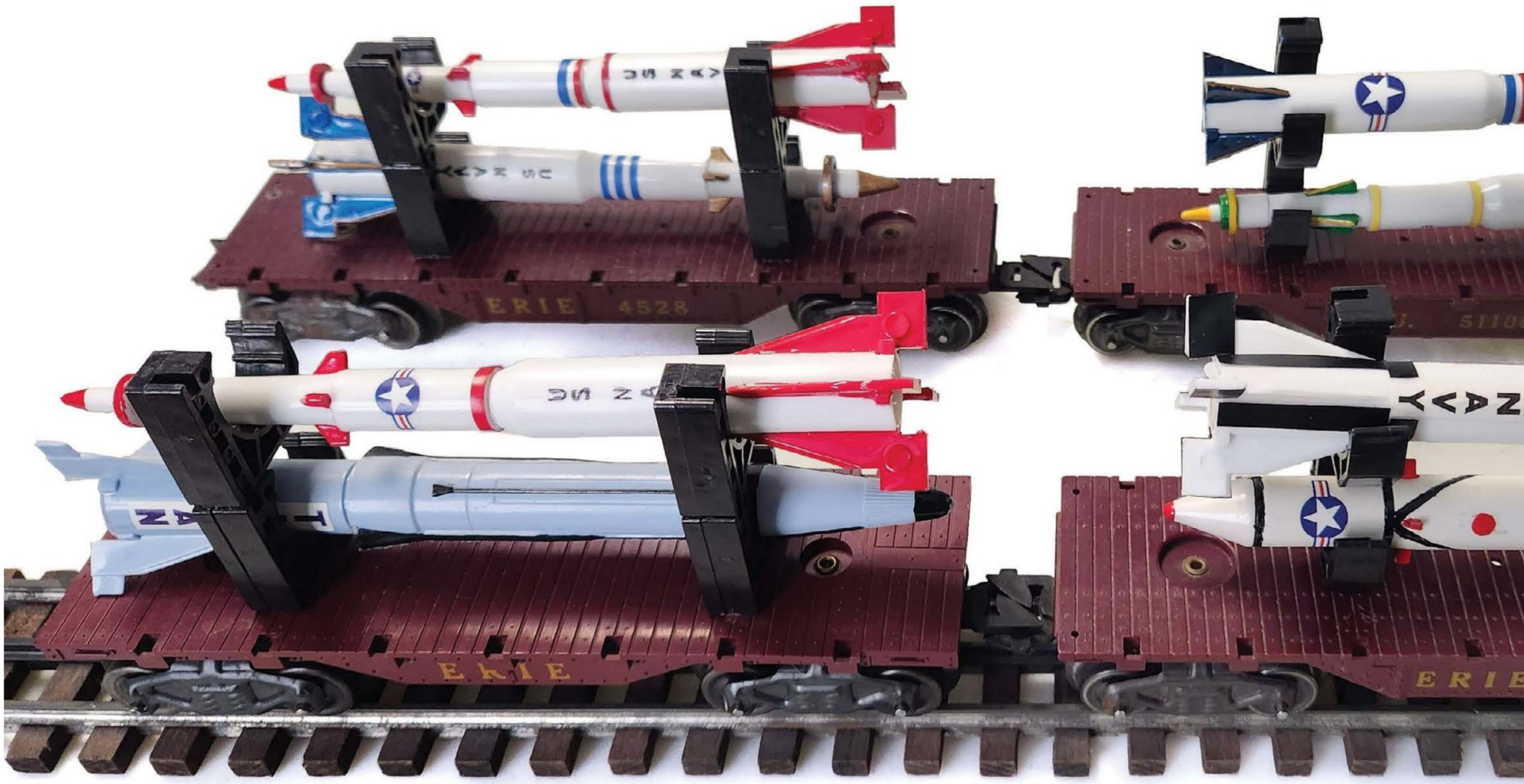
SHARE THE LOVE

There you have it. Virtually every trick and insight Don enjoys sharing with friends and up-and-coming layout builders. He takes pleasure in introducing his small yet delightful empire in 75 square feet, hoping to inspire them to build.

Maybe what means most to Don is knowing his O gauge layout follows in the tradition of what Westcott and McClanahan, not to mention Bill Bonanno and Joe Donato Jr. in Lionel's display department, sought to do. Their top goal was to present model trains in the most positive and beneficial light, hoping to convince onlookers they also could create exciting and fun layouts. Greatness could be achieved, as Don Winslow has proved, even if all you had was a spare room at home. GTT

8 These Lionel No. 8363 Baltimore & Ohio F3 diesels began life as the motive power for a Service Station Special offered in 1973. Don runs them only for special visitors.



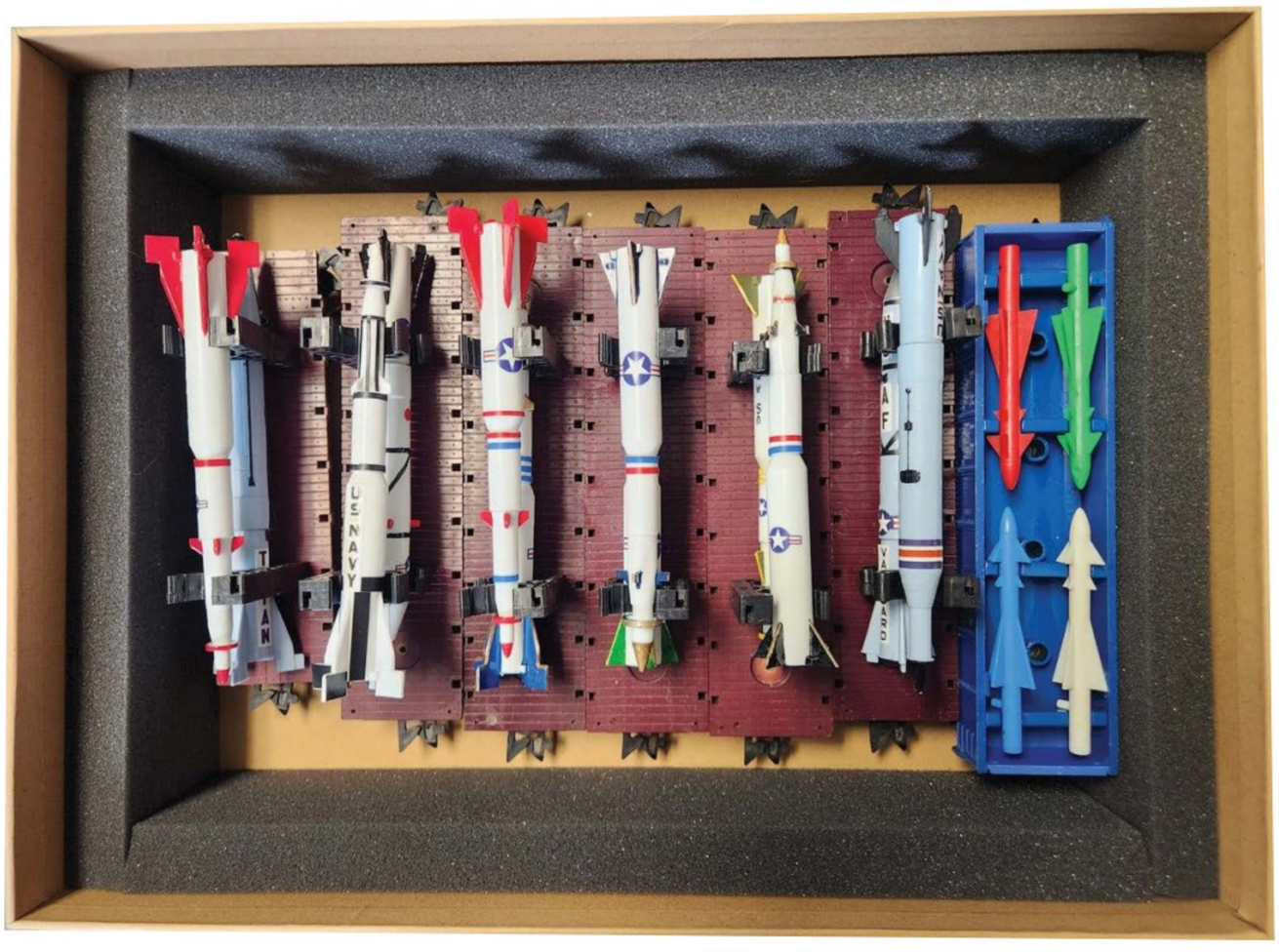


MAKE YOUR OWN

Missile Launcher & Carrier Car

An easy way to convert a Marx or Flyer flatcar

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JAMES R. RANCK



The author converted several Marx flatcars into specialized cars transporting missiles. He brought the updated models to a friend's home in this foam-lined box.

Louis Marx & Co. offered a Missile Launcher & Carrier Car that was a neat item. Unfortunately, it was available only in 1957, 1961, and 1962, which makes it tough to find. If you want a similar-looking car, I have a less-expensive solution that's an easy weekend project using either a Marx or an American Flyer S gauge flatcar.

A couple years ago, a friend brought over a Marx Cape Canaveral Play Set with its many accessories, including rockets and missiles. He wondered if I could find a way to mount them on Marx flatcars and brought along his Missile Launcher & Carrier Car as a sample.

Having a plumbing background, I went to my shop and pulled out some ¾" PEX pipe straps. It takes four straps per car for this project.

I removed the nails from each strap and determined they would need a ⅛" hole. After positioning the straps on the flatcar where they looked best, I marked the holes and drilled them through.

I put a small dab of cyanoacrylate adhesive cement (CA, also known as



The Marx Missile Launcher & Carrier Car is a spectacular piece, but it's not easy to find. Learn how to make your own car (or a whole fleet) much less expensively.

"super glue") under the nail heads and pushed them up and through the holes from the underside of the flatcar. Then I pushed the straps down over the nails on top of the car.

I added a little CA to both the bottom of the straps and the covered part of the nail. About half an inch or so of each nail protruded above the straps, which turned out to be perfect.

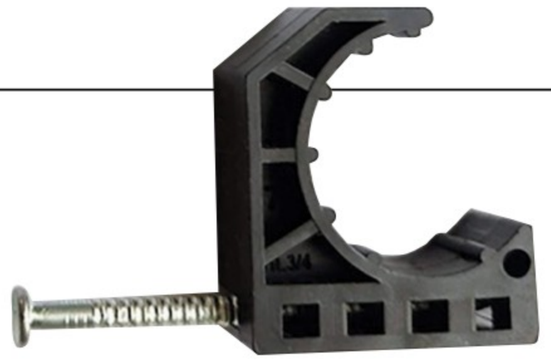
I removed the nails from the second pair of straps. I added CA on the top of the straps mounted on the car, around the nails and on the nails projecting from the straps. Next, I pushed the second set of straps on top. I allowed enough time for everything to dry.

Finally, I added the rockets on the new stanchions. My friend and I were pleased with the results. If you want to go a bit further and get fancy, try spray-painting the pipe clamps gray before installation to better replicate the original Marx version.

You can use this idea for other oversized loads, such as a couple of large culverts. Regardless of what you plan to haul, enjoy your new flatcars with loads! CTT

SUPPLY LIST

- O or S gauge flatcar
- Marx missiles or rockets, 2 per car
- Drill with ⅛" drill bit
- Cyanoacrylate adhesive (super glue)
- ¾" cross-linked polyethylene (PEX) plumbing pipe straps, 4 per car



PEX pipe straps can be found in the plumbing department of hardware stores or from online sources.



The author has glued on the first layer of 3/4" PEX pipe straps he salvaged.



Then the author removed the nails from the second set of straps. He used a little CA and pushed the second layer of straps onto the top of the first layer.



This simple and straightforward construction project will work nicely for S gauge flatcars too, as shown in this American Flyer example.



Easy ways to add details

HOW TO ADD FIGURES AND LEVEL UP YOUR LAYOUT

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MIKE MATEJKA

Ready to hit the high iron are a Lionel No. 671 Turbine; a Williams No. 2325 Lackawanna Train Master; a Williams Gulf, Mobile & Ohio observation; and an MTH Chicago & Alton 4-6-2 Pacific. Bug Valley's metropolitan center fills the background, including an impressive Lionel No. 115 City Station.

On my O and S gauge layouts, freight is hauled, passenger trains zoom, and accessories roar. Of course, without the human element it loses impact. Visitors come to see the trains, but what draws them in is the slice of life I created with human figures that bring purpose to the layouts. What good is a passenger train without riders waiting on the platform or a freight train without customers to receive the cargo?

I'm always searching for interesting and attractive human figures to populate what my daughter christened at a young age the "Bug Valley Lines." Refining scenic techniques, constructing buildings, and acquiring additional locomotives and rolling stock are key elements of improving my O gauge model railroad. So also is giving starring roles for the tiny people.

As visitors gather to see my layout, their eyes are drawn to specific scenes. "Oh, look at that," they say as they discover a particular cluster of figures. Then they start looking for other scenes around the layout. The rumble and roar of the trains are entertaining; an active scale population adds another dimension to any layout.



The lounging figures (Woodland Scenics) at Lindsay's General Store are concentrating so intently on their regular game of checkers that the puffing of a Lionel/K-Line Baltimore & Ohio 2-8-2 Mikado steam locomotive barely captures their gaze.



A Woodlands Scenic bluegrass band entertains the local citizens, but the track gang and nearby road construction workers also enjoy the workday musical lift. Look closely at the Plasticville storefronts and you'll notice three Simpsons and two Disney characters.



Two workers (left, Woodland Scenics) look on skeptically as their foreman (K-Line) gives instructions to lift a Lionel transformer off a depressed-center flatcar. Nearby, a Lionel Burro crane is ready to assist them.

FIVE QUICK TIPS

1 **Create mini-scenes.** Figures that are clustered together will inspire visitors to do more than just glance at your layout; they'll start to look more closely to discern the activity.

2 **Use corners.** Corners are great places to create a scene that helps complete the layout. Higher elevations or a small scene become the layout's visual frame.

3 **Add vegetation.** Trees and ground foam can add another dimension, particularly with trees' angular or rounded shapes. Trees make excellent transitions between specific sections and invite viewers to see sections individually.

4 **Create height or depth.** Cutting out a section for a waterway or stacking Styrofoam to add height will break up the individual sections and invoke a more realistic and truly life-like landscape.

5 **Personalize.** It's easy to use a computer to create billboards and business signs with the names of friends, family, and pets. This personal touch will honor and delight visitors.



Classic Plasticville and K-Line storefronts and houses fill one end of the authors O gauge layout. Figures that seem to be busy shopping and working inject life into this great scene.



A Woodland Scenics conductor signals the engineer on an MTH Chicago & Alton 4-6-2 Pacific, coaxing the *Alton Limited* passenger train to a stop. The Lionel No. 2156 Station Platform is decorated with homemade signs, honoring family members and pets.



Chris Montagna surprised the staff and students at the elementary school where he works with a removable ceiling layout. Learn how to build one in this article.

Building a temporary O gauge ceiling layout

A HOLIDAY DISPLAY THAT REQUIRES NO POWER TOOLS FOR INSTALLATION

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CHRIS MONTAGNA

Two years ago, I decided to build a small oval of track to feature my Lionel No. 2123060 Hallow's Eve Limited Ready-To-Run Set. I quickly cut up plywood and screwed down some extra GarGraves track to make a display. While this O gauge display got the job done, when I pulled the sectional pieces out of my shed the following year, most of the track had rusted or was bent.

I wanted to make something to display my Halloween train during trick-or-treating and later feature a Christmas train at my workplace (an elementary school). There had to be a better way.

PLANNING THE DESIGN

My main focus was to build a display light enough to hang from a drop-ceiling frame yet still be strong enough to take apart, toss in the car, and store for months at a time. First, I thought about what to use to build the main structure. Plywood seemed like an obvious choice. While it's not necessarily appealing to the eye, most of the wood would be hidden by snow or spider webs anyway. Half-inch plywood was the winner. It's strong enough for what I needed without adding too much weight.

I chose the FasTrack system from Lionel because it's rigid and can be powered by a simple wall plug. I sourced the track online by requesting donations. It seems people have unneeded FasTrack under their layouts!

STARTING THE BUILD

I bought a sheet of 4 x 8 plywood and laid out my track plan. The design is simple, using straights and O-31 curves. I traced the track onto the wood as best I could to make a template for cutting. I needed the wood sections to break where two sections of track joined. That would enable me to easily assemble and disassemble the display while allowing the wood base to protect the track pins and edges when the layout is in storage.

I used a circular saw and jigsaw to cut out the wood sections. I cut each section ¾ of an inch wider than the FasTrack base. After test-fitting everything, I made a few adjustments to the cuts and then screwed the track sections down onto the wood.

After securing all the track to the wood sections, I plugged in the track and tested the loop to determine whether there were any power dips or bad joints that could cause a derailment. A derailment from 10 feet up would be catastrophic!

When I screwed the track to the wood I made certain to keep the outside edge of the FasTrack at least ¾ inch from the edge of the wood. This allowed me to have a

SUPPLIES

½-inch sheets of plywood
Circular saw
FasTrack
Wing nuts
Bolts
Drop-ceiling hooks
Chain
Cable ties
Removable wall hooks
Snow blanket or spider webs
Staple gun

RESOURCES

Building an overhead layout, Fall 2025 CTT
Build a diorama, Fall 2024 CTT
Layout planning tips, Fall 2024 CTT

uniform space around the outer edge of the wood to secure the sections together.

Even with the track joined, it was important to join the wood sections together for added stability. I wanted something that would look less intrusive when viewing the layout from below. To secure the wood sections together, I cut pieces of ½-inch plywood into strips ¾ inches wide and 4 inches long. I drilled a ⅜-inch hole on either end of each wood section. I then added two bolts into the holes and secured them with wingnuts. This allows for easy installation (or removal) without needing power tools.

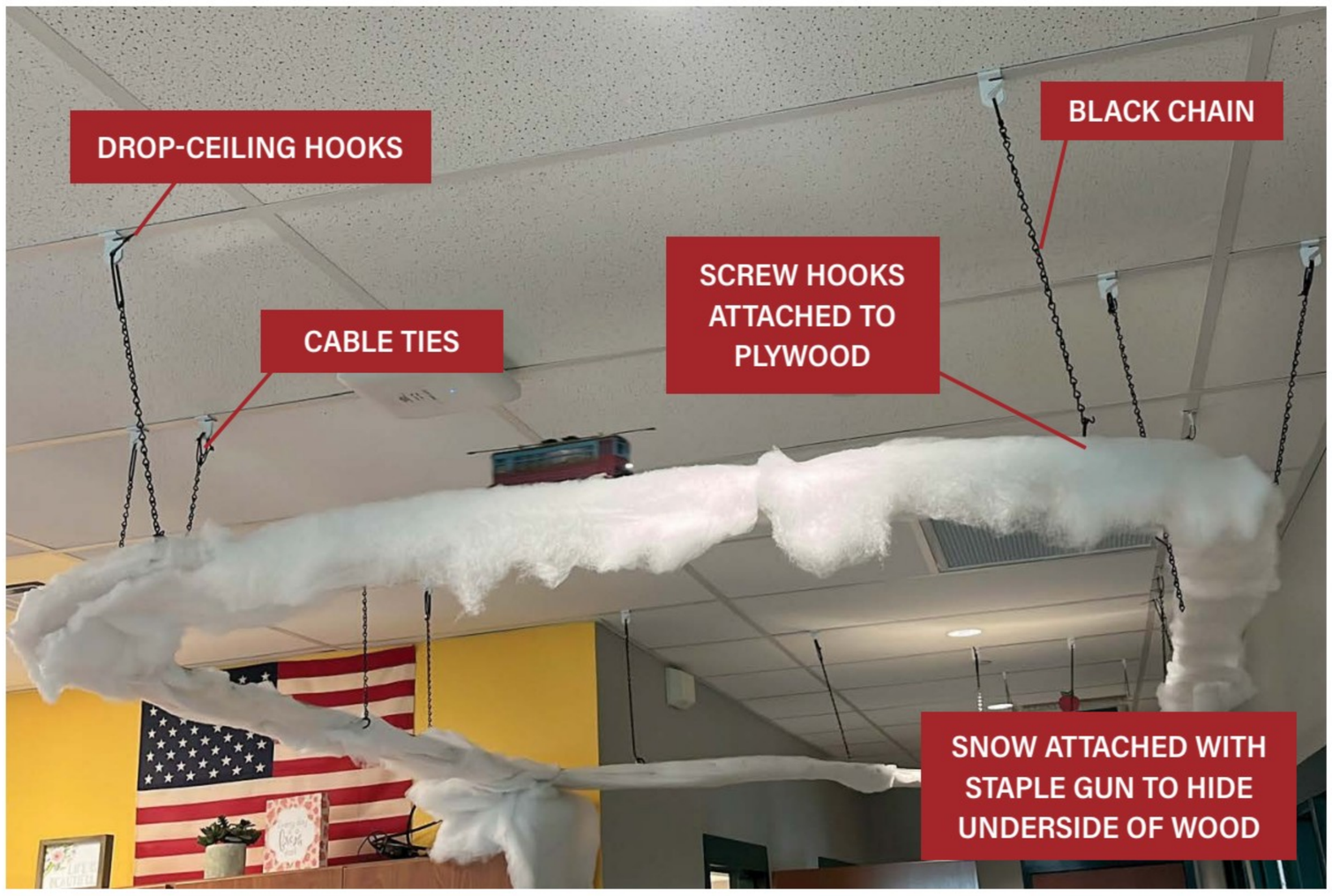
HANGING THE ASSEMBLY

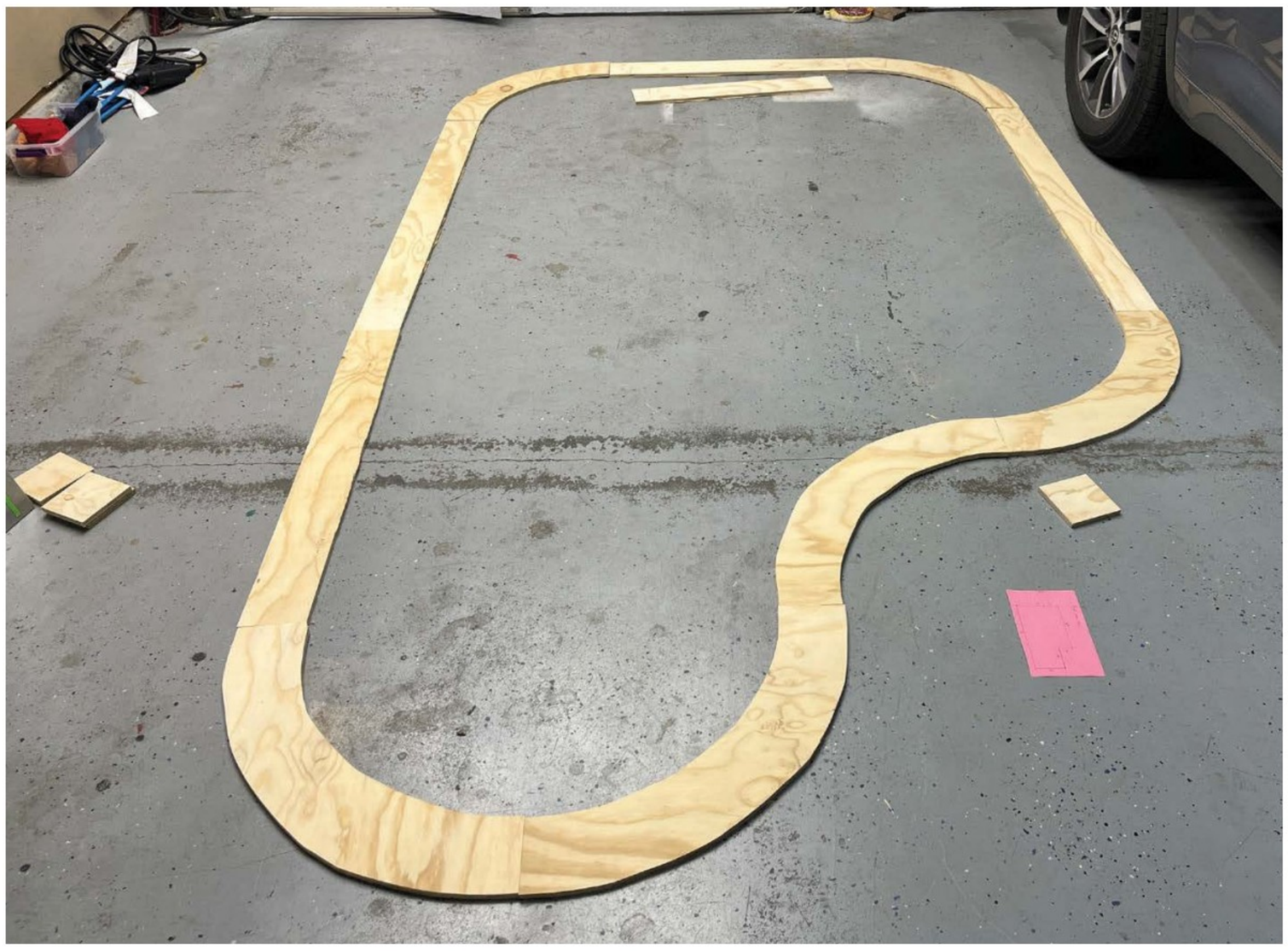
My next challenge would be hanging this assembly. I talked with the facilities team at work to understand the weight ratings for the drop-ceiling frame. My system would hold without issue, because I would spread out the load across multiple supports. I bought packs of screw hooks and drop-ceiling hooks from Amazon, 30 feet of small black chain, and cable ties (also known as zip ties) from a hardware store.

Over Thanksgiving break, I sneaked into work and started the installation. I measured the height I wanted the layout to be above the floor and then cut the chain into sections that would allow it to be the chosen distance from the ceiling.

I laid everything on the floor to see where each section would line up to the ceiling grid. I then screwed the hooks into the wood sections in a few spots where I estimated it would line up to the grid. I placed a hook on the ceiling grid in a similar location.

Since each section was a manageable size and weight, I could undertake the assembly myself. I hooked the chain onto the sectional piece first and looped a cable tie on the opposite end. I could easily loop the cable tie over the drop-ceiling hook.

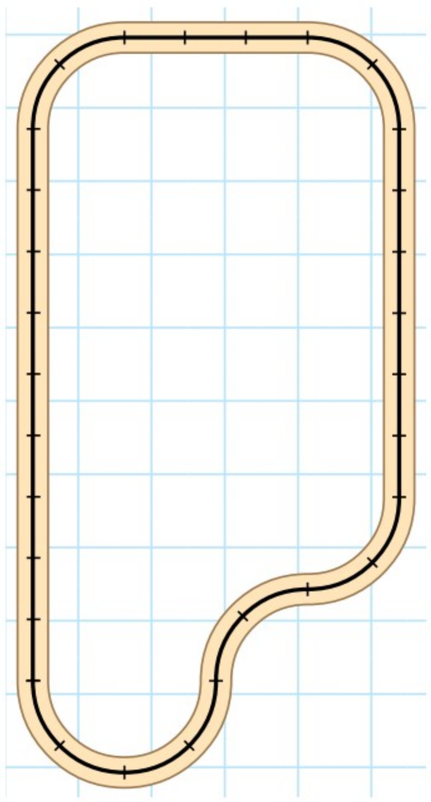




After tracing the track pattern onto ½"-thick plywood, Chris cut the wood into sections. He allowed ¾" on either side of the FasTrack edge and made sure the section cuts aligned with FasTrack joints.



Chris covered the plywood underside with a snow blanket. You could paint the wood instead.



LIONEL FASTRACK COMPONENTS

Quantity	Description/Number
18	10-inch straight (12014)
12	0-31 curve, 45-degree (37103)

Once the sections were hung, I started joining them. I first connected the track, carefully sliding the ceiling grid hooks to allow sections to hang as naturally as possible. I used the wingnut joiners to connect each section of wood. Once the layout was connected, I adjusted specific cable-tie loops until the entire unit was level.

GETTING IT READY

Now to cover that exposed plywood! I bought a roll of fake snow, cut it, and affixed it to the underside of the wood with a staple gun. This helped hide the unsightly wood from view. A few removable wall hooks kept the power wire against the wall, and a power strip easily cut power at the end of each day. I ran a final test and made more adjustments.

My LionChief Santa Fe *Super Chief* ran flawlessly. I used the LionChief app to lower the locomotive volume so it would not be a distraction and applied a speed limiter to prevent accidents.

When teachers and students returned the next week they were surprised by the holiday addition. As we did with the O gauge diorama featured in the Fall 2024 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*, we switched the locomotive and cars throughout the season. This time, however, students could earn a chance to run the train and blow the whistle.

FINAL THOUGHTS

While the design of the layout is quite functional, it's not polished. I could get away with using plywood because I was going to put the fake snow around the underside. You might choose to paint the plywood before installation or add simple scenery/ground cover.

When hanging the track, getting the sections level was a challenge. The cable ties made adjustments a breeze. Looping these around the end of the chain and then hooking them onto the ceiling hooks allowed me to make small adjustments throughout the process.

I recommend laying everything out on the floor and testing the track and connections before screwing the track onto the plywood. I made sure each section break aligned with a track connection. This prevented the track from hanging past the edge of the plywood and getting damaged during transport.

Overall, this was a great addition to the office and has functioned well as both a Halloween and a Christmas display. Everyone enjoyed it, and the unit is stored safely in my shed until the fall. CTT

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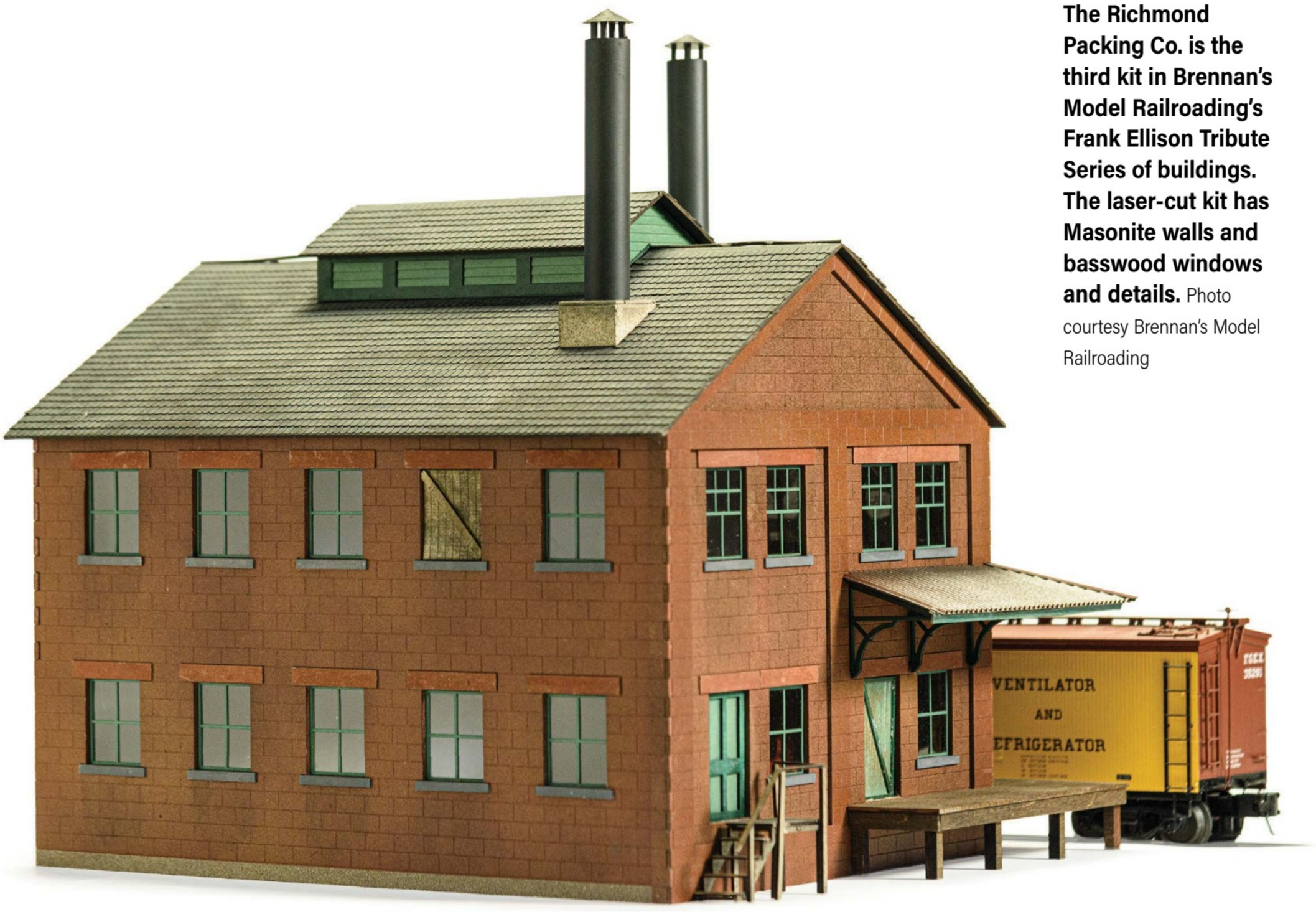
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The Richmond Packing Co. is the third kit in Brennan's Model Railroading's Frank Ellison Tribute Series of buildings. The laser-cut kit has Masonite walls and basswood windows and details. Photo courtesy Brennan's Model Railroading

BUYER'S GUIDE TO

structures

A VARIETY OF MANUFACTURERS IN O AND S GAUGE

STORY BY RENE SCHWEITZER

Even the smallest layout needs at least a few structures on it. We've compiled a list of manufacturers currently offering products in O and S scale. We've noted each manufacturer's contact information plus the type of structures it makes, materials used (if known), and options for lighting. Please contact the manufacturer directly if you have questions about its products. If you know of a manufacturer not on this list, please contact us at editor@classictoytrains.com.

A big thank-you to Dennis Brennan for his assistance with this article.

ALTOONA MODEL WORKS
2172 Cross Cove Rd.
Martinsburg, PA 16662
altoonamodelworks.net
altoonamodeler@gmail.com
814-793-7016
Scale: O
Type of structures: kits
Materials: cast urethane and laser-cut wood, depending on model
Lighted: No

AMERI-TOWNE
OGR Publishing Inc.
1310 Eastside Centre Ct., Ste. 6
Mountain Home, AR 72653
ogaugerr.com/collections/ameri-towne
info@ogaugerr.com
800-980-6477
Scale: O
Type of structures: kits
Materials: polystyrene
Lighted: No

ATLAS O
378 Florence Ave.
Hillside, NJ 07205
shop.atlasrr.com
cs@atlasrr.com
908-687-0880
Scale: O
Type of structures: preassembled and kits, depending on line
Materials: most kits are plastic; laser-cut kits are wood; preassembled kits are plastic
Lighted: Kits, no; preassembled, some have lighting

BACHMANN INDUSTRIES
(Plasticville U.S.A)
1400 E. Erie Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19124
shop.bachmanntrains.com
info@bachmanntrains.com
Scale: O
Type of structures: kits
Materials: plastic
Lighted: No

BAR MILLS SCALE MODEL WORKS
P.O. Box 609
Bar Mills, ME 04004
barmillsmodels.com
barmillsmodels@yahoo.com
207-929-3400
Scale: O
Type of structures: kits
Materials: wood with metal castings
Lighted: No

BRENNAN'S MODEL RAILROADING
P.O. Box 520174
Independence, MO 64052
Brennansmodelrr.com
Scale: O
Type of structures: kits
Materials: laser-cut basswood and/or MDF
Lighted: No

B.T.S. (BETTER THAN SCRATCH)
1782 Trinity Rd.
Belington, WV 26250-7621
btsrr.com
wadepub@ix.netcome.com
304-823-3729
Scale: O, S
Type of structures: kits
Materials: wood, brass, white-metal details
Lighted: No

BUSCH GMBH & CO.
Heidelberger Straße 26
D-68519 Viernheim, Germany
busch-model.com
info@busch-model.com
Scale: O
Type of structures: prebuilt, kits
Materials: ABS plastic, wood details
Lighted: some options available as separate sale

DOWNTOWN DECO
Downtown Deco
P.O. Box 335
Conner, MT 59827
downtowndeco.com
downtowndeco@montana.com
Scale: O, S
Type of structures: kits
Materials: Hydrocal castings, plastic details
Lighted: No



The B.T.S. Howard Brothers Feed & Grain Complex (No. 181070 is available in S and O scales. Photo courtesy B.T.S.

EAST COAST ENTERPRISES
trainlayouts.com
info@trainlayouts.com
973-366-5788
Scale: O
Type of structures: preassembled structures and unpainted building fronts; custom services available
Materials: laser-cut wood
Lighted: Yes

FRENCHMAN RIVER MODEL WORKS
P.O. Box 86
Langdon, ND 58249
frenchmanriver.com
701-256-2129
Scale: O/On30, S
Type of structures: kits
Materials: resin with pewter details
Lighted: No



Hotel Belvedere (out of production) was an O gauge structure produced by TW Trainworx, which offers kits and preassembled buildings. Photo courtesy TW Trainworx

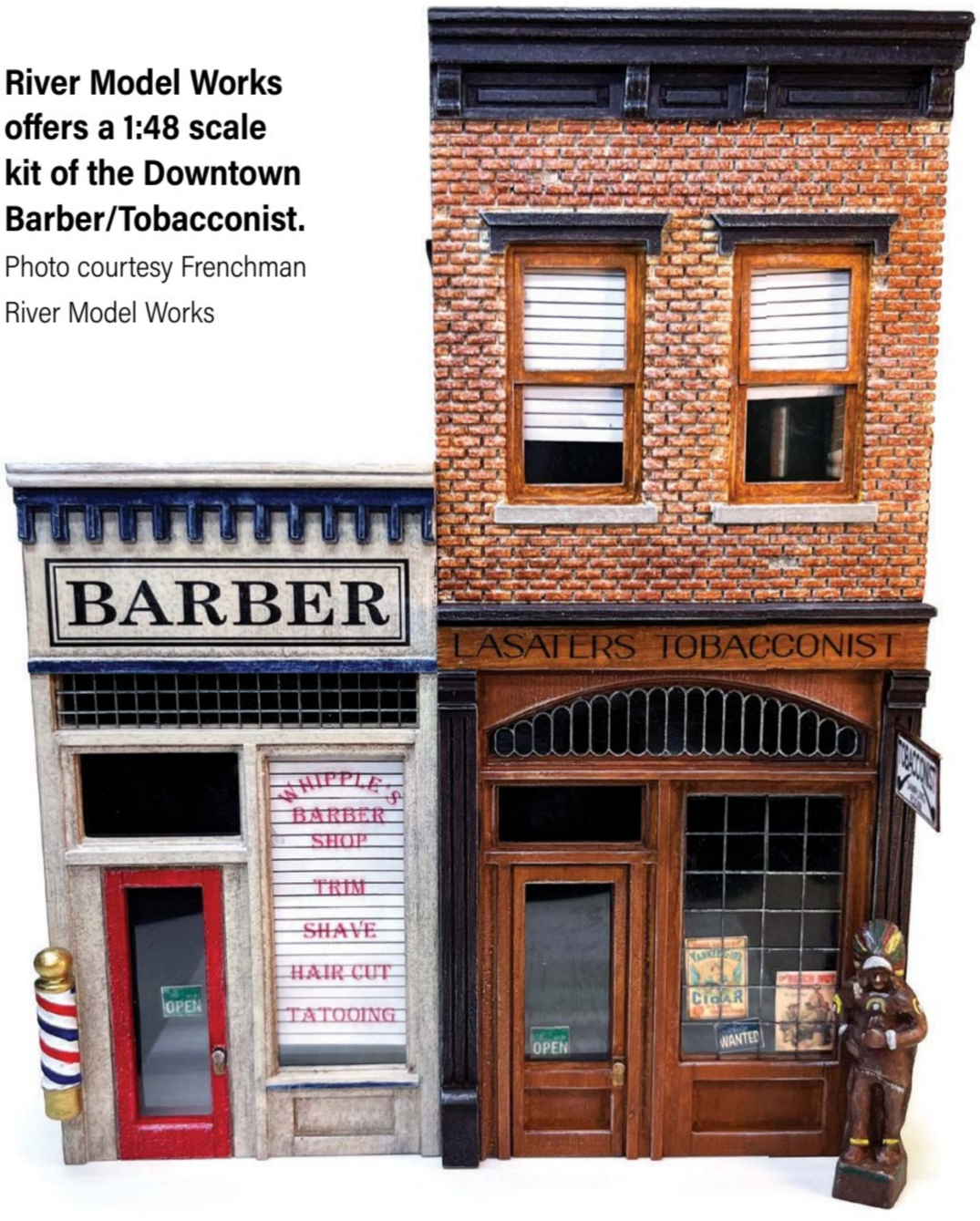


Steve's Music Store (No. 66911) is an injection-molded plastic kit from Atlas O. It's part of the firm's Hillside Structure Line.
Photo courtesy Atlas O



Bachmann released a Plasticville 75th Anniversary Split-Level House (No. 45633) in 2025. Photo courtesy Bachmann

River Model Works offers a 1:48 scale kit of the Downtown Barber/Tobacconist.
Photo courtesy Frenchman River Model Works



KORBER MODELS
Mr. Muffin's Trains
165 E. Main St.
Atlanta, IN 46031
mrmuffinstrains.com/collections/korber-models
support@mrmuffinstrains.com
765-292-2022
Scale: O
Type of structures: kits
Materials: plastic, with wood pieces and details depending on kit type
Lighted: No

LIONEL
6301 Performance Dr.
Concord, NC 28027
lionelstore.com
800-628-6202
Scale: O, S
Type of structures: prebuilt
Materials: ABS plastic
Lighted: Most are lighted; a few may not include lighting

MENARDS
Menards.com/trains
Scale: O
Type of structures: prebuilt
Materials: primarly MDF, plastic details
Lighted: Most are lighted

MTH ELECTRIC TRAINS
7393 Washington Blvd., Ste 101
Elkridge, MD 21075
mthtrains.com
Scale: O
Type of structures: prebuilt
Materials: ABS plastic
Lighted: Most are lighted; small items may not include lights

PLASTRUCT (Trackside Series)
68 Bradrock Dr.
Des Plaines, IL 60018
plastruct.com
847-813-5700
Scale: O
Type of structures: kits
Materials: plastic
Lighted: No

SAN JUAN DETAILS
(formerly Grandt Line Products)
8141 N I-70 Frontage Rd., Ste. 5
Arvada, CO 80002
sanjuandetails.com
303-284-5072
Scale: O, S
Type of structures: kits
Materials: styrene and acetal plastic
Lighted: No

TODD ARCHITECTURAL MODELS
54 Mountainview Rd.
Chatham, NJ 07928
toddarchitecturalmodels.com
toddmodel@mac.com
973-507-4072
Scale: O, S
Type of structures: kits, custom-painted models
Materials: various
Lighted: lighting can be added to most structure orders



Korber Models is owned by Mr. Muffin's Trains. Shown is the O Scale Grain Silo Kit (No. 315). Photo courtesy Mr. Muffin



Menards Union Station (No. 2759531) is a lighted structure that's ready to place on your layout. Cody Grivno photo



Todd Architectural Models offers a line of structures and builds custom items. Shown is a trackside warehouse building. Photo courtesy Todd Architectural Models

TWIN WHISTLE SIGN & KIT CO.
31 Turnberry Dr.
Arden, NC 28704
twinwhistle.com
twinwhistle@hotmail.com
828-329-0924
Scale: O, S
Type of structures: preassembled, kits
Materials: cast resin with laser-cut accessories
Lighted: No

TW TRAINWORX
2808 McGowan St.
Dallas, TX 75203
twtrainworx.com
214-634-2965
Scale: O, S
Type of structures: preassembled, kits
Materials: laser-cut MDF, laserboard
Lighted: no if kit; yes if preassembled

WOODLAND SCENICS
P.O. Box 98
Linn Creek, MO 65052
woodlandscenics.com
573-346-5555
Scale: O
Type of structures: prebuilt, kits, modular structures
Materials: various
Lighted: no if kit; yes if pre-built
CTT



The No. 2329340 Lionelville Theatre Building is an O gauge offering in Lionel's current product line.
Photo courtesy Lionel



Ken may be standing by himself here, but he promotes working on a layout with a family member or friend from the hobby. The first of his collaborators was his son, Dan.

Flyer layout built with cooperation

LISTENING TO OTHERS GUIDED KEN BALDWIN

STORY BY ROGER CARP // PHOTOS BY CHUCK WINGATE III

The story behind the attractive and dependable S gauge layout built by Ken Baldwin can be summarized as the result of paying attention to other people and letting them inspire your best work. Certainly, this is what has guided Ken over the past almost 40 years.

Everything started in 1990 with a simple request from his son, not even a teenager at the time. Music lovers should think of the interaction between Ken and young Dan as the reverse of what the late singer-songwriter Harry Chapin observed in *Cat's in the Cradle*, which he recorded in 1974. It narrates the tale of a youngster eager for his father to play with him and give him the attention he deserves. Dad, sadly, is too busy reading his newspaper and thinking about business to devote time to his son. Eventually, when the man has grown old and wants to spend time with his adult son, the latter has no time.

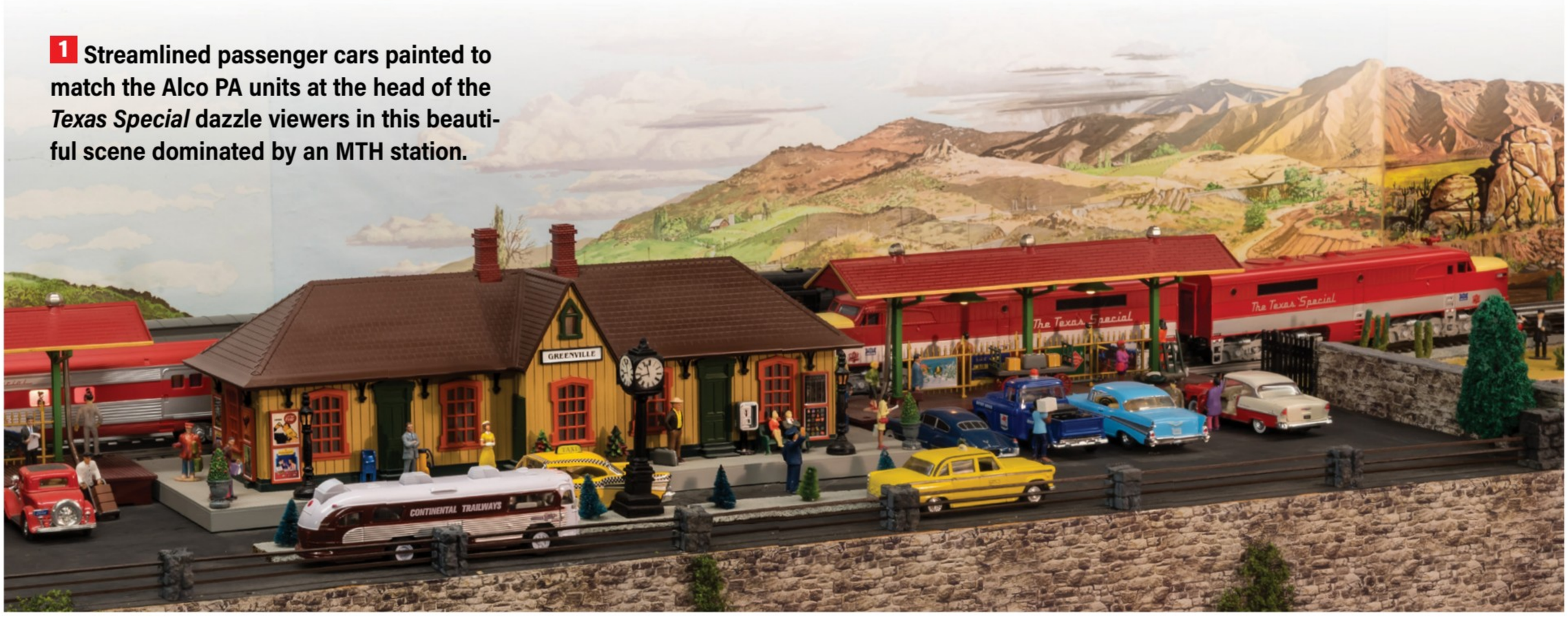
Fortunately for the Baldwin family, Ken cared enough about his son to pay close attention when Dan returned home from playing with a friend who had a small O gauge layout and asking whether the two of them might build something like it. Ken smiled and said they could indeed do that using the American Flyer trains he had received when he was about Dan's age more than 30 years before. The rest, as you can see here, is history!

READY TO PLAY

Quite honestly, every parent can remember such pivotal moments in his or her relationship with a child. Ken and his wife, Vera, certainly can. They agree that Ken, preoccupied with something or merely tempted to avoid beginning a project like building a layout, might have replied, "Not now, son. Maybe when you're older or I have some spare time." Heck, he might even have chided Dan by saying, "Don't you realize how expensive electric trains are? I don't think we're ready for that kind of commitment."

Unlike the self-centered father in *Cat's in the Cradle*, Ken recognized what a wonderful opportunity had just presented itself. He quit whatever he was doing, gave Dan his complete attention, and more or less declared, "That sounds like a fantastic idea! I have an American Flyer train set from when I was a kid, and it can help us get started."

Besides tightening the bonds between father and son, Ken's eagerness to bring new life to his boyhood electric train was about to transform his own life. From that second right up to the present, Ken has



1 Streamlined passenger cars painted to match the Alco PA units at the head of the *Texas Special* dazzle viewers in this beautiful scene dominated by an MTH station.

2 Ken isn't reluctant to name the hobo camp as his favorite spot. Hidden recording devices enhance the vignette with the sounds of a campfire plus jug band music to sing along with.



3 **A basic design concept Ken endorses is having more than one level of activity. The elevated section on his layout has bridges, animated signs, and detailed structures.**



4 **S gauge modeler Ken Baldwin knows how to inject life and interest into the scenes on his 18 x 24-foot railroad. The men fishing, the women rocking in chairs on the porch of the cabin, and the tire swing hanging from a tree catch the attention of every viewer.**

been operating S gauge trains and constructing layouts, each being better than the previous one. And he's been collaborating along the way, first with his son and later with fellow Flyer enthusiasts who have become friends.

Ken's 18 x 24-foot display exemplifies his commitment to the hobby that has brought him joy. It brings smiles to the faces of Dan and his sister Cindy (now in their 40s) and members of the next generation in the family playing with toy trains, grandchildren Ella, Ethan, and Charlotte.

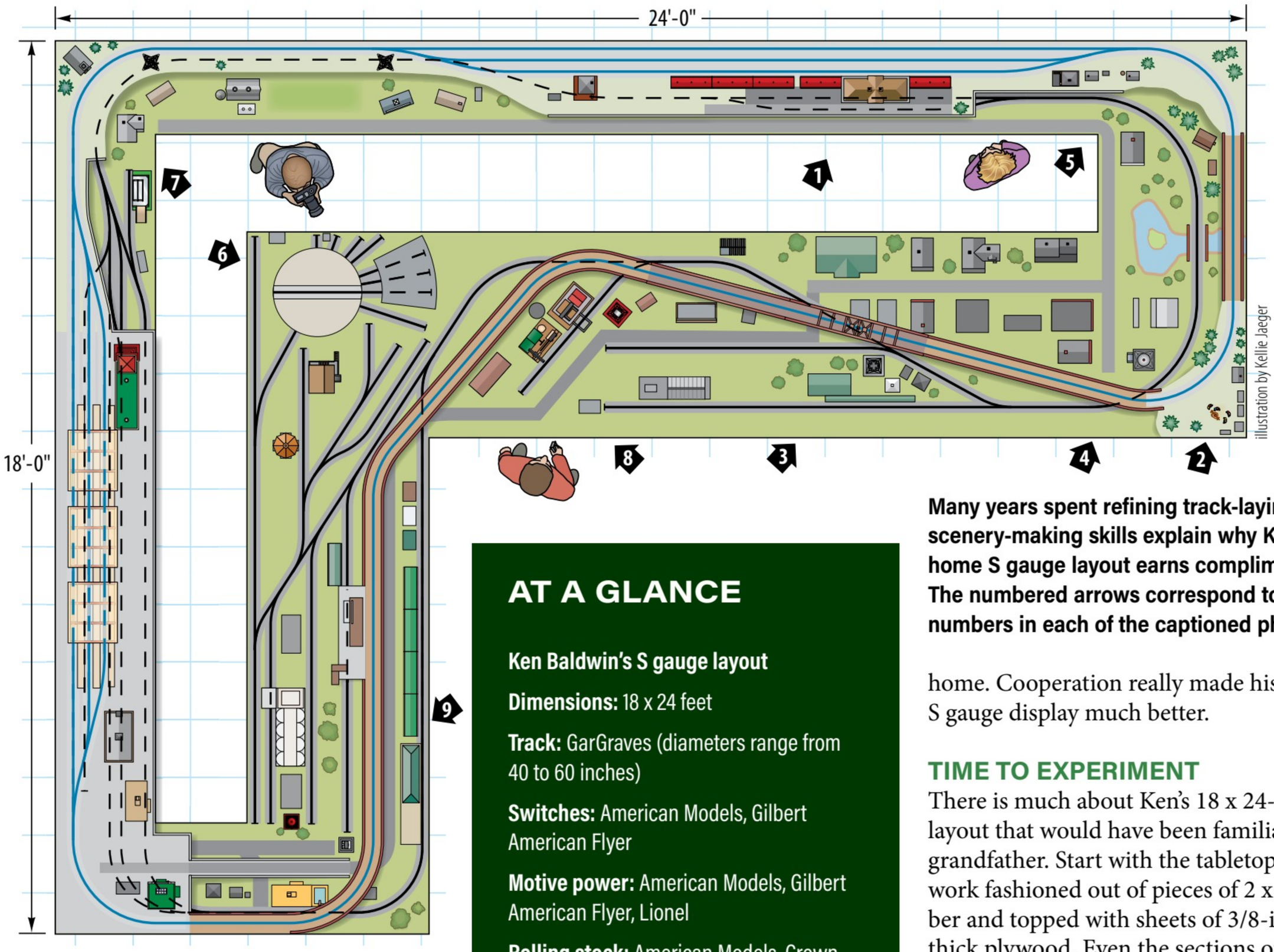
TEACHING DAN

Once Dan made his request, Ken probably couldn't stop talking about the magical gift he had received for Christmas in 1957 or '58. The American Flyer No. 5615T New Black Diamond Freight Set used a No. 303 4-4-2 Atlantic steam engine and tender to pull its neat rolling stock that included a No. 970 Seaboard walking brakeman car. Plus there was among the old trains a No. 926 Gulf tank car, not to mention lots of the track needed.

"Let's get going!" Dan yelled, putting into words the sentiment filling his father's heart. Together, they rushed to insert the pins connecting the straight sections of track to the curves.

If the process seemed like second nature to Ken, it's because when he had been even younger than Dan he had repeated the actions and learned how to operate his freight train under the watchful eyes of an older family member who also had been wise enough to listen and pay close attention. In Ken's case, the kindness came from his grandfather.

"My grandfather had set up a 4 x 8-foot tabletop with an oval of American Flyer track on it," Ken recollected. "No scenery



Many years spent refining track-laying and scenery-making skills explain why Ken's home S gauge layout earns compliments. The numbered arrows correspond to the numbers in each of the captioned photos.

on it. Just three Plasticville structures, one of Gilbert's neat whistling billboards, and a silver-painted tunnel that somebody had made out of wood."

Pretty basic and yet the most incredible model railroad Ken could imagine. He had played with it regularly for the next few years until his family had moved to another place in his native New England. Then the trains had been packed away. Luckily, the notion of discarding them or donating them to a neighbor or cousin never crossed the mind of Ken or his parents. They must have believed that one day another youngster at home would feel the urge to build a layout and the Flyer set would get another life.

Which is precisely what happened in the 1990s. Ken patiently taught his son how to master every task related to enjoying and running the vintage trains. They attended local shows, always bringing home another treasure or two. As important, father and son were making friends among other hobbyists. Ken in particular was meeting collectors and operators who would encourage his efforts after Dan had moved on to other pastimes.

AT A GLANCE

Ken Baldwin's S gauge layout

Dimensions: 18 x 24 feet

Track: GarGraves (diameters range from 40 to 60 inches)

Switches: American Models, Gilbert American Flyer

Motive power: American Models, Gilbert American Flyer, Lionel

Rolling stock: American Models, Crown Models, Gilbert American Flyer, Lionel, S-Helper Service

Controls: Lionel No. CW80 PowerHouse (2) with Legacy command control

Accessories: Bowser, Broadway Ltd., Gilbert American Flyer, Lionel, Marx, Miller Engineering

Structures: K-Line, Lehigh Valley Models, Lionel, Mini-Craft, Model Tech Studios, MTH Electric Trains, Plasticville U.S.A., Woodland Scenics, scratchbuilt

Vehicles: Corgi, Dimestore Dreams, Dinky, Lledo, Matchbox

Figures: Arttista, Life-Like, MTH, Plasticville U.S.A., Preiser, Woodland Scenics

Ken expresses gratitude to all of those fellows, especially Chuck Wingate, who took these great pictures of Ken's layout. They were there as Dan and he finished an 8 x 16-foot railroad that later was doubled in size and given a second level. And different hobby friends guided Ken when he expanded that layout about 10 years ago by removing a wall in the basement of his home. Cooperation really made his large S gauge display much better.

TIME TO EXPERIMENT

There is much about Ken's 18 x 24-foot layout that would have been familiar to his grandfather. Start with the tabletop benchwork fashioned out of pieces of 2 x 4 lumber and topped with sheets of 3/8-inch-thick plywood. Even the sections of cork Ken secured over that layer would have made sense to someone constructing a layout in the 1950s. Anything that reduced the noise the trains produced was going to be seen as a blessing!

Then came the first departure from tradition. Ken had grown up with American Flyer track. He had trusted it for the layout he built with Dan. But in the intervening years he had been introduced to the realistic track manufactured by GarGraves. The flexibility and the wood ties impressed Ken, so he abandoned the vintage track for GarGraves. In the same vein, he switched from antique turnouts to new ones from American Models.

Above all, Ken's open mind and willingness to experiment prodded him to adopt command control. Gone were the postwar transformers Dan and he had relied on. In their place were a pair of Lionel 180-watt PowerHouse supplies. They were perfect for running the stable of new locomotives Ken had bought that were equipped with Legacy features.

"I find the trains run much better with constant 18 volts," Ken explained. "I get stronger smoke from my steam engines and brighter lights in the passenger cars.



5 **One corner of Ken's layout takes visitors back to the Old West. Prospectors and cowpokes marvel at the network of rails that have been laid by an army of laborers.**



6 **A Train Master road diesel, decked out in the demonstrator scheme used by Fairbanks-Morse, looks smashing doing nothing more than relaxing on a turntable. The miniature figures working at the roundhouse feel honored to be around the beautiful locomotive.**

All my locomotives respond better with Legacy command control. Also, I really like having the freedom to walk around the layout with a handheld controller and generate the sound effects, including whistles, bells, cab and tower chat, and chuff and steam release."

SCENERY'S FUN

Long ago, way back on that initial S gauge layout Ken's grandfather made, there wasn't any landscaping. The tunnel and the Plasticville buildings substituted for scenery. No miniature mountains or forests or ponds. Needless to say, Ken has since corrected those omissions.

"Making scenery turned out to be so much simpler than I imagined!" How many of today's modelers have uttered the same words? This declarative sentence fits Ken's experience to a tee, thanks to familiar items (screen wiring and plaster) as well as the array of easy-to-use materials (rock molds, ground cover, and ballast) now on the market.

A favorite source of inspiration and opportunity for Mr. Baldwin is Woodland Scenics. He points out areas on the layout where its pigments and ground foam made all the difference. He also gives a big thumbs-up to the same firm's clump foliage and trees.

The waterways adding visual interest to several areas were done with Woodland Scenics Realistic Water. All Ken needed to do first was paint the bottom blue. Once he had poured the Realistic Water, he inserted bullrushes and greenery at the banks and shoreline.

Every part of landscaping proved more enjoyable than Ken had anticipated. Also fun and satisfying was making streets and highways using black plastic shims from The Home Depot.

Where Ken wished to suggest rural areas or cities were larger, he finished those sections by gluing behind them backdrops from Wm. K. Walthers. They looked appropriate with the different postwar Plasticville kits and the new structures from MTH Electric Trains.

TEAM EFFORT

When talking about S gauge modeling, Ken leaves it a secret as to whether his favorite "co-conspirators" are his adult kids, hobby buddies, or grandchildren. He refuses to pick any of the terrific people who sign on to enhance vignettes and operate trains.

The only way to pin down Ken is to ask which part of the layout he likes best. Then he'll describe the hobo jungle, with its flickering campfires and hidden recording devices. You can hear the sounds of a roaring campfire where fellows heat their

chili. Visitors can also detect toe-tapping jug-band music being played to accompany nightly songfests.

Inviting people to sing along with the tunes or to discover enchanting details scattered across the S gauge railroad brings Ken and his wife, Vera, immense pleasure. "A simple tabletop layout can be rewarding," they note. "Just create a good track plan with room for buildings and train yards. Don't be afraid to try making hills and valleys."

Something else that Ken firmly tells anybody who is considering constructing an S or O gauge layout is to encourage the participation of a spouse, a friend, or a youngster. There's never any reason for a model railroader to write a new verse to *Cat's in the Cradle*. CTT



7 **The engineer driving the handsome Milwaukee Road 4-6-2 Pacific steam engine and tender (American Models) seems to have braked so he can offer congratulations to the bride and groom walking out of the American Flyer No. 166 church on a warm Sunday.**



8 **A Lionel No. 48085 Denver & Rio Grande Western 4-6-6-4 Challenger commands the elevated line. Passing Grundy Lumber with an American Flyer No. 23796 sawmill, it's pulling Union Pacific passenger cars.**

9 **Who wouldn't yearn for a ticket to ride in style inside the Union Pacific heavyweight cars? The elegant Armour Yellow and Harbor Mist Gray colors on the Lionel models epitomize the glory of passenger travel.**





Lionel's overlooked 6464-565 New Haven Boxcar

SOLVING A 50-YEAR OLD PUZZLE

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOE ALGOZZINI

Sometime back in 1974 or 1975, I purchased from its original owner a Lionel train set (without boxes) that happened to include a No. 6464-425 New Haven Boxcar. Although the set appeared to be original, I wasn't really sure. Knowing that Lionel had cataloged the 6464-425 from 1956 through 1958, I decided to check the full-color consumer catalogs.

In the consumer catalog for 1957, I noticed a set illustrated on pages 6 and 7 that looked like the one I had bought. Lionel was not listing product numbers to sets in its catalogs at that time, but I later learned this set was numbered 1573. I kept it, especially since the boxcar had plastic trucks; my other 6464-425 boxcars came with metal trucks.

LIONEL SERVICE MANUAL

Funny isn't it that when I started acquiring Lionel trains and accessories from the post-World War II era, I never envisioned myself as a researcher. I just went about buying Lionel trains exactly the way I had bought baseball and football cards as a youngster.

Everything changed for me, however, when a very good friend of mine, Matt Gross, who had owned an approved Lionel Service Station on the Southside of Chicago, allowed me to copy all the pages of his *Lionel Service Manual* in late 1975. After reading every page from start to finish, I learned a lot of information, although at that time, I didn't understand what studying those service pages would actually mean to me.

For example, I noticed a 1961 entry that included a 6464-565 from 1957, which further explained it was an "Orange" New Haven. Boy, was I stumped! However, I decided to start looking for a 6464-565 individual box — something I've never found.

NEW UNDERSTANDING

But that finally changed in 2005, when John Schmid of Project Roar Publishing was photographing my uncataloged sets for his upcoming book, *Authoritative Guide to Lionel's Promotional Outfits, 1960-1969*. It became clear — more of a surprise than a shock — that many of the "-25" and other suffix numbers I'd been looking for meant the items came packaged unboxed inside a set and were held in place by cardboard dividers.

Bingo! All of a sudden something obvious hit me after so many years of searching and investigating. I realized that the 6464-565 I was looking for was nothing more than that New Haven boxcar I had bought about 30 years earlier from the original owner. That made sense because I



More than 50 years ago, the author bought the unboxed contents of a Lionel freight set with four cars and a caboose from its original owner. Research eventually led him to conclude that it was outfit No. 1573, shown in the consumer catalog for 1957.

was aware that Lionel had released some low-end O-27 outfits with some components placed unboxed in the set box back in 1957.

And by once again checking that 1961 *Lionel Service Manual* entry, I noticed the door listed for both a 6464-425 and 6464-565 boxcar was the same exact part: No. 6464-428.

In other words, the 6464-425 came boxed and the 6464-565 was unboxed. Not only that, but I realized the model also had two important identifying features that distinguished it from the other New Haven boxcars manufactured by Lionel in 1957.

FINAL TEST

Now all I needed to do was duplicate the purchase I had made long ago. I had to find a complete and original boxed example of a 1573 and compare the components to make sure it was originally assembled and packaged that way by Lionel. I eventually did discover a boxed 1573 in excellent condition at a local toy train auction. All the cars, including the New Haven boxcar, were fitted with the same features I was looking for.

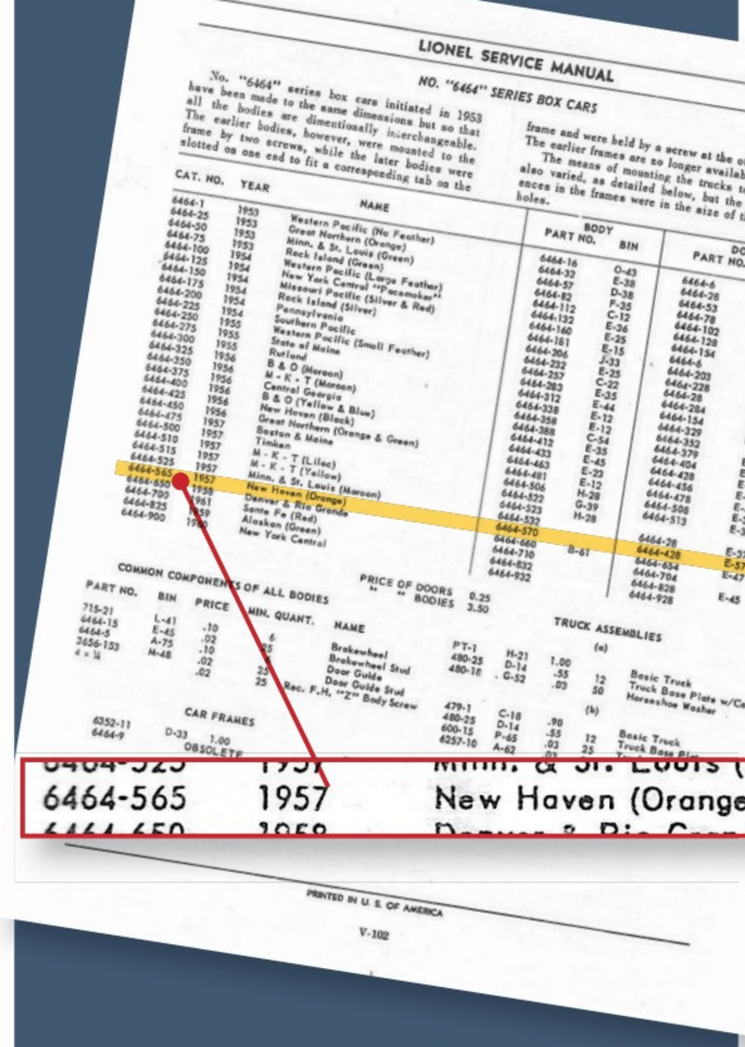
Every car in this set, which included Nos. 6112 Gondola, 6025 Tank Car, 6464-565 New Haven Boxcar, 6476 Hopper, and 6017 Caboose, was fitted with the two important features I was looking for: "black spring rivets" and "rounded axles."

Best of all, because no books on Lionel trains had the information I was looking for, I was absolutely positive that nobody would know how to correctly package this set except Lionel and me.

Very soon, however, you'll be able to learn this and much more about Lionel's classic and collectible No. 6464 series of near-scale boxcars in what John Schmid at Project Roar Publishing is calling *Authoritative Guide to Lionel 6464 Box Cars*. GTT

Special thanks go to John Schmid, Matt Gross, and Roger Carp.

Unlike a 6464-425 New Haven boxcar from 1956 in the author's collection, the model in the set, like the other pieces of rolling stock, came with AAR plastic trucks and couplers.

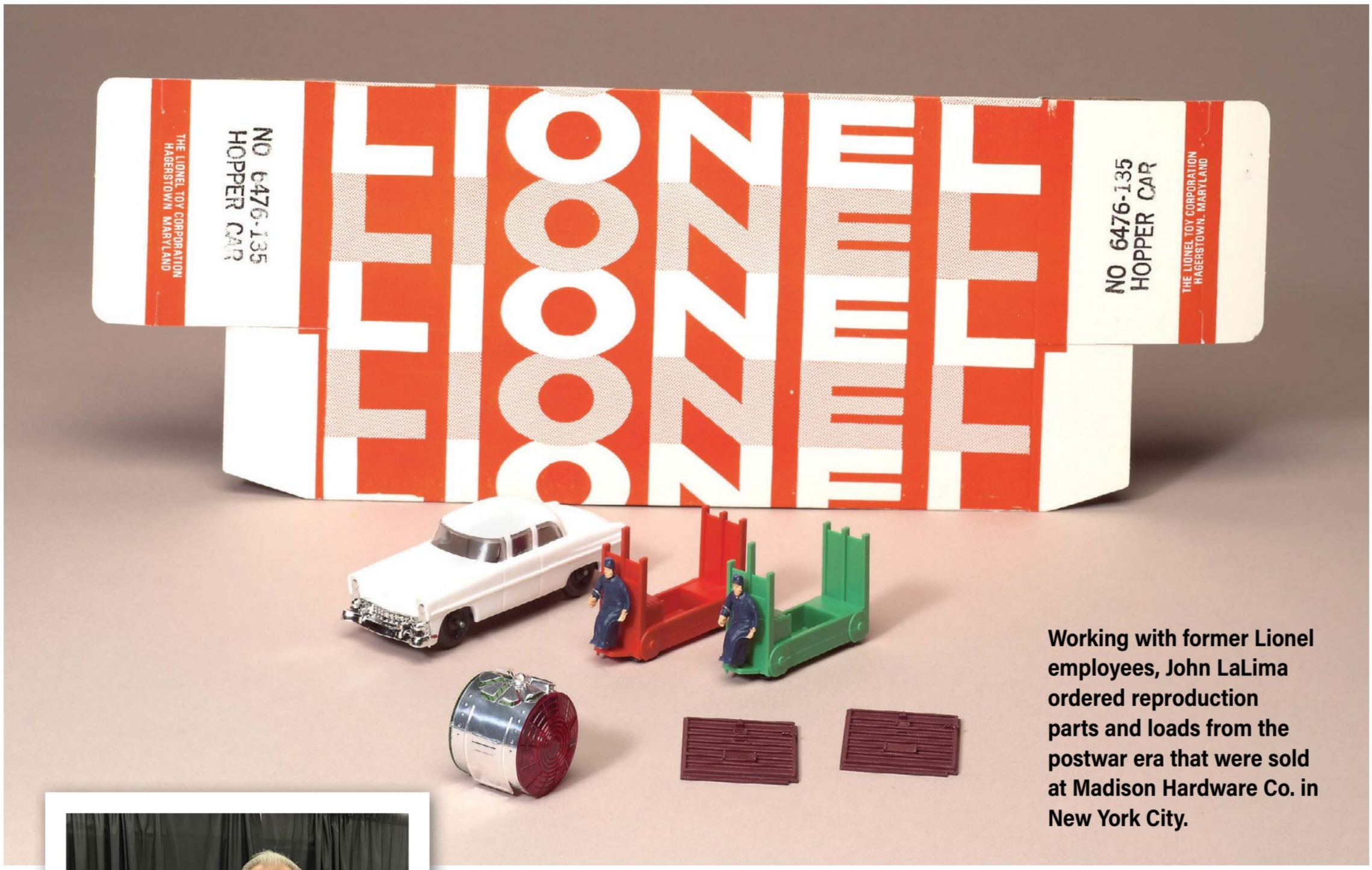


Further research, this time with the *Lionel Service Manual* from 1961, showed that a New Haven boxcar similar to the No. 6464-425 in the author's 1573 set, had been assigned the product number 6464-565. He was determined to find an original box with that number.



More research led the author to conclude that Lionel had identified a 6464-425 New Haven boxcar placed unboxed in the 1573 as 6464-565. That his car had come from that outfit was proved by its having "black spring rivets" and "rounded axles."





Working with former Lionel employees, John LaLima ordered reproduction parts and loads from the postwar era that were sold at Madison Hardware Co. in New York City.



John LaLima covers every postwar base

EAST COAST TRAIN PARTS & COLLECTIBLES CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF SUCCESS

STORY BY ROGER CARP

If you visit a typical toy train show prior to the time it officially opens, you'll see vendors setting up their tables. Men and women will be putting out for sale old and new trains and accessories, track, scenery materials, structures, and more. The vast majority of folks need less than an hour to arrange everything. Then they wait for the show to start.

Circumstances are much different for John LaLima, longtime owner of East Coast Train Parts & Collectibles, which is based in Englishtown, N.J. Friendly and upbeat, he arrives several hours before the show opens, usually with his warm and outgoing wife, Lucille, with him to provide assistance. With John's large and diverse inventory of just about everything related to postwar Lionel, they need plenty of time and space to prepare.

Life has been this way for John for the past 40 years. To celebrate East Coast Train Parts & Collectibles and all the hard work put in by John and Lucille, we're proud to spotlight this great business.

SEAFOOD TO TRAINS

Anyone talking with John in the early 1980s, not too long after he married Lucille and their son was born, would have assumed his future lay with seafood. His grandfather had started a restaurant on Staten Island in 1910, and hungry diners had made it a huge success. John's father had taken over, and he expected John to follow suit after he decided to retire.

John, however, looked for something different that he could make his own, especially after receiving master's degrees in advertising and marketing. Little did he realize how life was about to change for

him on the day in 1984, when his mother unpacked his boyhood Lionel trains and insisted he pass them over to his little son and her beloved grandson. John did just that.

Everything might have ended there, except that John enjoyed seeing the postwar locomotives and cars in action again. He wondered whether local hobby shops still had anything left over from the 1950s and '60s. Which they sure did. So, John bought some pristine models and searched for more at local train shows in New Jersey.

Before long, John was actively buying postwar Lionel and American Flyer toy trains and then, after keeping a few cherished pieces, selling what was left. He found a wonderful mentor and friend in Tony Romundi, a respected toy train dealer living on Long Island, all the while still managing what was the largest seafood store and restaurant on Staten Island.

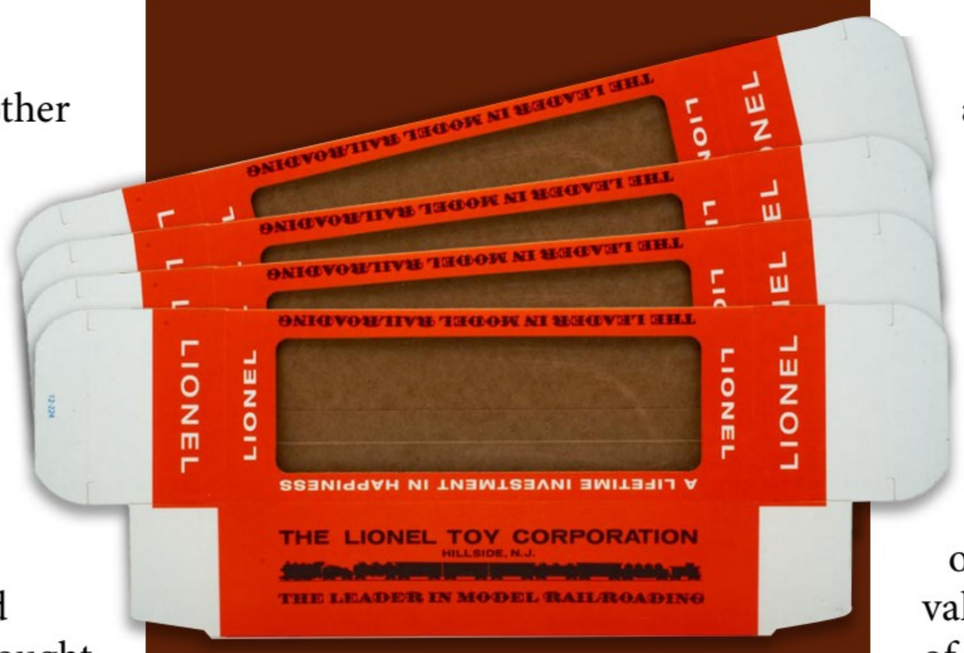
MEETING LOU AND CARL

John's involvement with trains was moving along when he began visiting Madison Hardware Co. on a regular basis. He won the trust of Lou Shur, the owner of the famous Lionel outlet in New York City. Carl Shaw, Lou's brother, became a good friend of John's. He would help find the mint and like-new postwar locomotives and rolling stock buried in one of the storage areas used by Madison Hardware.

From 1987 until 1989, when Lou sold his inventory to Richard Kughn, owner of Lionel Trains LLC, John made weekly trips to Madison. He walked in with a list of trains and parts he wanted, and Lou and Carl did what they could to accommodate the gentleman who had become one of their best and most loyal customers.

John realized that Madison was a great source of original and reproduction parts, assemblies, and loads. He increased his inventory of the ancillary items people at train shows and hobby shops needed for repairing their trains and completing models missing vital pieces and carloads.

Wisely, John became acquainted with former Lionel employees who were working independently in the 1970s and '80s as manufacturers of Lionel parts and loads. Besides buying from Madison, John was in contact with Tony Gotto, a onetime model maker at Lionel, who had established Donna Models in northern New Jersey to make injection-molded plastic automobiles, boats, and other key loads.



East Coast Train Parts & Collectibles currently sells more than 350 different licensed Lionel reproduction boxes. Visit eastcoasttrainparts.com to see the entire inventory.

SHOW TIME

John is like all entrepreneurs, always looking for the next opportunity and trying to build on what he has already done. In the middle 1990s, John was tired of lugging loads of trains to shows and having to rent tables. Why not, he asked himself, be the one handling the shows and collecting fees from vendors? He knew what would work.

John was able to partner with Joe Bianco to assume leadership in 1996 of what was known as the National Collectors Club. They organized popular train shows throughout New Jersey. John's many experiences, good and bad, along with the knowledge and expertise reflected in his two master's degrees, had taught him what made a successful show for sellers and buyers. For 30 years, John has been the hard-working and innovative individual overseeing some of the most well-attended toy train shows.

John's always looking for the next opportunity and is determined to build on what he has already done.

NEVER FINISHED

Another major step forward occurred in 2001, when John acquired the Greenberg Book Store and asked Lucille to manage it. Only then did he feel he could walk away from the family seafood store and restaurant and keep pursuing Lionel trains.

Once John was running the National Collectors Club, he seemed to have almost every base covered. He even invited Lenny Dean and Frank Pettit, two legendary former Lionel employees from its golden years, to attend and sign autographs and answer questions. Meanwhile, John's inventory was expanding to include hobby books and magazines, videotapes and calendars, and assorted collectibles related to trains.

John kept hearing from customers about the component boxes they wanted to protect their postwar treasures. He appreciated the importance of boxes as enhancing the monetary value of Lionel trains, but his own supply of the familiar orange-and-blue boxes was limited by what he had once bought.

The answer was to make reproduction boxes whose dimensions matched those of original ones. John realized how many different sizes had been made for Lionel. Using his experience and collaborating with outside experts and good friends, including Len Carparelli, John developed an array of more than 350 different boxes.

John obtained Lionel's permission to manufacture boxes, which were labeled as authorized reproductions. The venture proved to be lucrative, and East Coast Parts & Collectibles regularly replenishes its inventory and adds new ones, as John does with reproduction parts, some of which no one else has ever made.

LOOKING AHEAD

More shows and bigger inventories — these words encapsulate John's business plan as he looks ahead to a bright future after 40 years as an entrepreneur and Lionel enthusiast. There have been setbacks, notably the pandemic that ended the National Collector Club and its shows.

When train shows could be safely scheduled again in 2023, John moved forward on his own by creating ECTP & Collectibles.

Make it a point to look for John and Lucille at the show put on in York, Pa., by the Eastern Division of the Train Collectors Association. Or attend one of their shows in New Jersey. You'll have fun talking with them, hearing memories of Madison Hardware and exploring their ever-growing stock of postwar and modern Lionel items, along with books and boxes.

You can always take the simpler path of going online and checking out the website maintained by East Coast Train Parts & Collectibles. There, you'll find virtually everything related to Lionel trains to improve your personal collection. CTT

MORE FROM JOHN LALIMA ► *Lionel's space and military trains*, Sept. 1995 CTT; *An almost perfect world*, Nov. 1995 CTT

Add a passenger platform to your layout

This easy project uses Plasticville components

STORY AND PHOTOS BY GILES DYELLE



The author used part of a Plasticville U.S.A. Airport Hangar to create a covered platform for passengers on his home O gauge layout. Learn his techniques in this article.

Do you have a spare Plasticville U.S.A. Airport Hangar roof in your parts box? I turned mine into a covered passenger platform. You'll need just a few supplies, materials from your scrapbox, and some creativity to add one to your layout.

First, you'll need an appropriate location for the platform. The next step is an important one: Calculate the canopy height based on your tallest piece of equipment — locomotive or rolling stock (**Photo 1**). You need to make sure you have enough clearance under the roof.

I purchased ½"-square wood (available at any hobby shop) and cut four corner posts to length (based on the needed clearance) to form a framework. You'll also need to cut a center beam that's a bit shorter than the length of the roof to allow for a realistic overhang. This beam will secure the two end frames and provide needed stability.

Lastly, you'll need to cut two canopy support pieces for each end. Again, you'll note that I cut the wood ends just a bit shorter than the canopy side to allow for overhang. I use either CA (cyanoacrylate adhesive, commonly known as superglue) or clear epoxy to join the pieces (**Photo 2**).

To simulate open web steel structural cross bracing, I added two inverted plastic model naval ship stands from my spare parts bin (**Photo 3**). The center beam fits nicely into the stand pieces. In **Photo 2** you'll see I cut a slot in each corner post to allow the ship stands to pass through.

Make sure to check clearance before gluing the parts together (**Photo 4**).

I added a clock (a watch face from an office paperweight) and secured it with putty. You'll also see where I added lighting for the platform (**Photo 5**).

I covered the "Plasticville Airport" wording with cardstock to form roof vent covers. The roof isn't glued to the base but just rests on the structure to allow for easy access.

The roof isn't glued to the base but just rests on the structure to allow for easy access.

I wanted a similar color palette to Lionel's passenger stations, so I used Krylon Burgundy spray paint for the platform, Emerald Green for the structure, and Chalky Finish Anvil Grey for the roof.

I built a passenger platform from heavy boxboard (a shoebox) and used extra Plasticville fencing (spray painted) to keep passengers safe (**Photo 6**).

I'm pleased with the result. For minimal cost, I now have a unique structure on my layout. I hope I've inspired you to try experimenting with Plasticville pieces. CTT

SUPPLY LIST

- Plasticville U.S.A. Airport Hangar (Bachmann No. 45986)
- Scrap plastic pieces
- Plastic fence pieces
- Balsa/wood pieces
- Boxboard (or other thin cardboard)
- Cardstock
- Optional: lighting, watch face/small clock
- Krylon spray paints: Colormaxx Burgundy, Chalky Finish Anvil Grey, Colormaxx Emerald Green
- Hobby knife
- CA cement or clear epoxy

MORE PLASTICVILLE PROJECTS

Two projects from the Frosty Bar, Fall 2024

Small scenes, big impact, Sept./Oct 2023

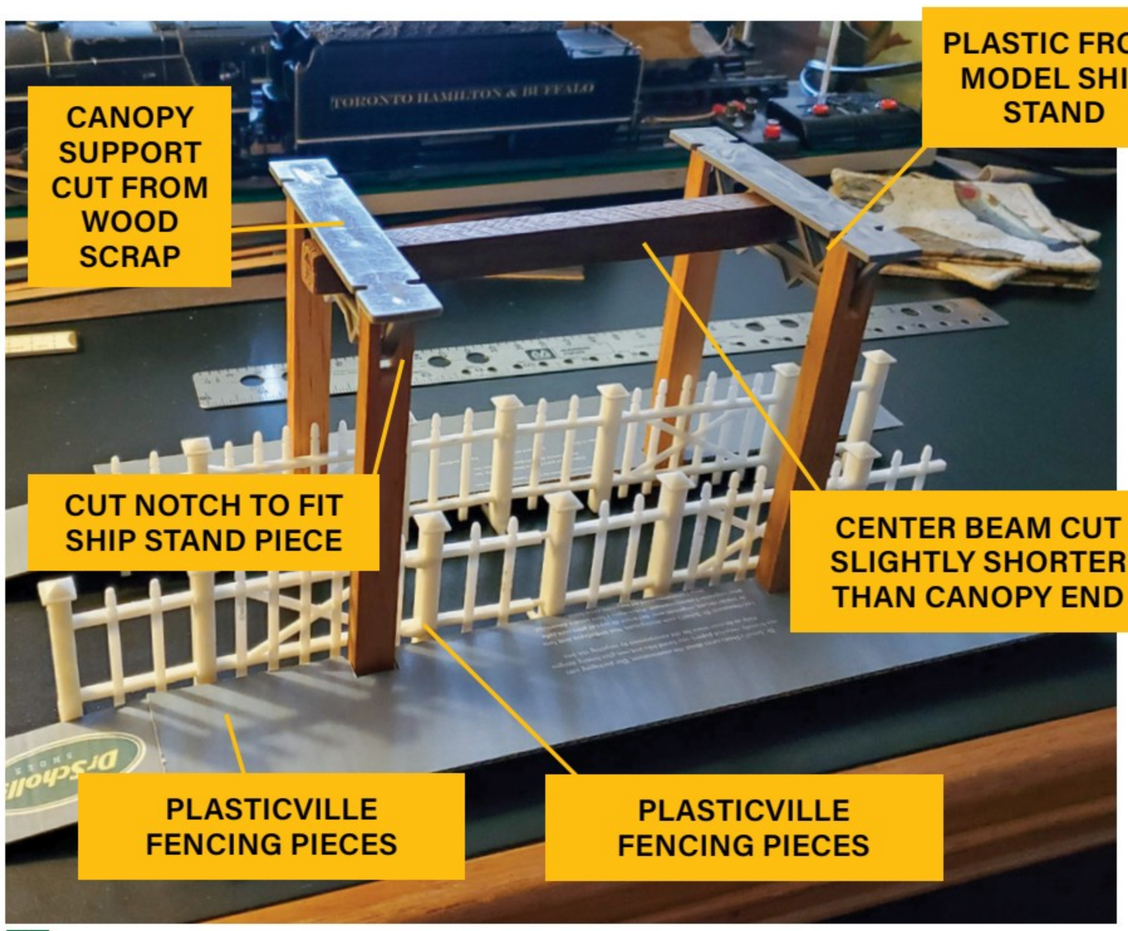
Diner kit bash, Nov./Dec. 2022

Details, details, Sept. 2021

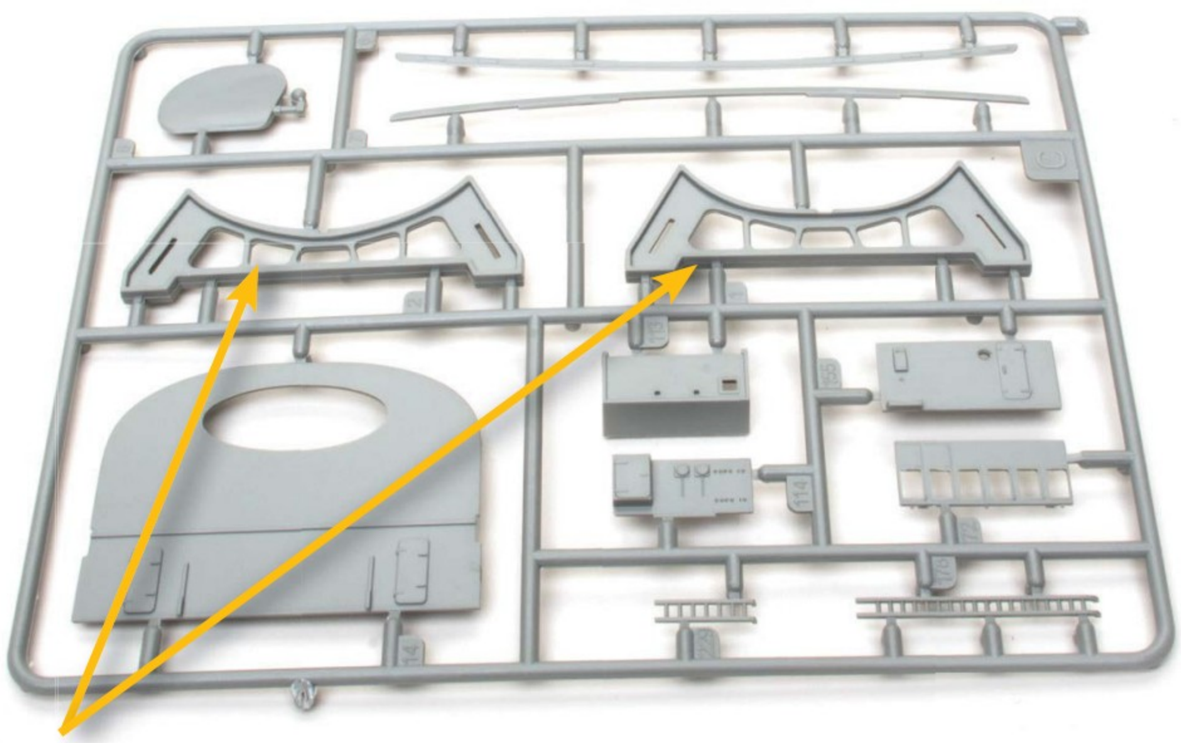
Bring a bike rider to life, March 2020



1 Be sure to measure the height of your tallest equipment to allow enough clearance under the canopy.



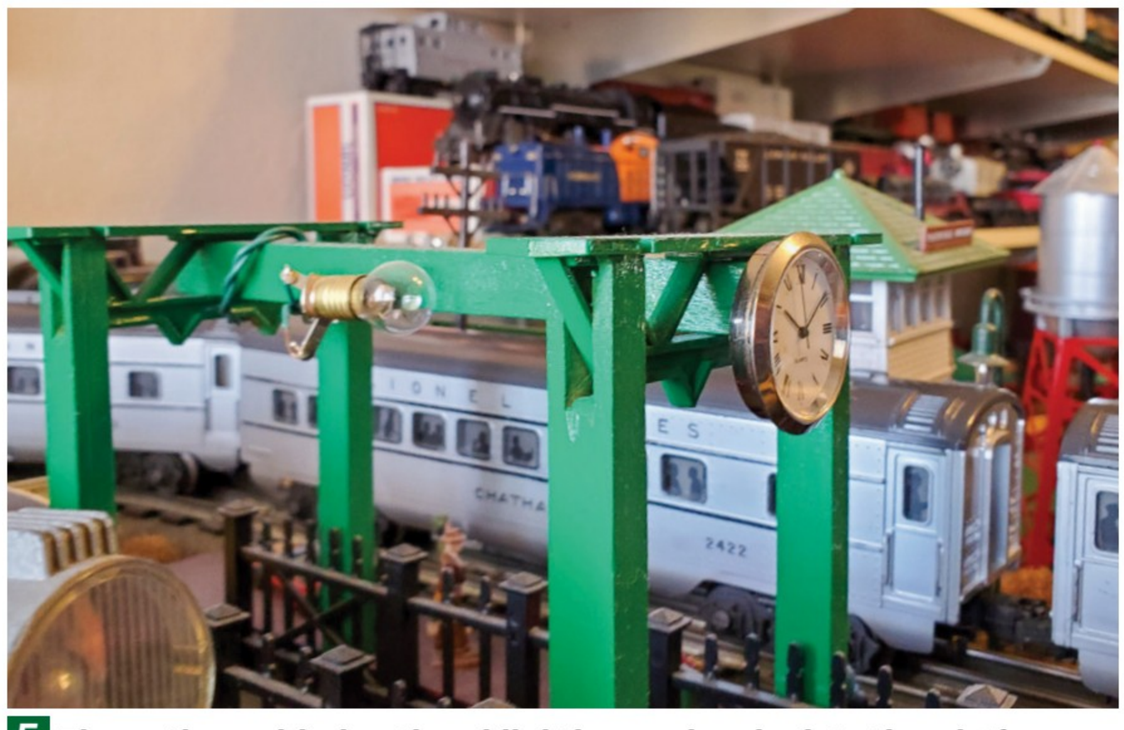
2 The author used the wood he purchased at a hobby shop and scrap plastic he had to create the canopy supports.



3 The author used two ship stand pieces for this project. This photo shows a sprue from a Revell model ship kit. Tim Kidwell photo



4 Before gluing everything together for your passenger canopy, it's always a good idea to check clearance.



5 The author added optional lighting and a clock to the platform. Instead of an incandescent light bulb, you could add a strip of LED lights to the underside of the canopy or the center beam.



6 Here's the author's painted and detailed canopy, along with a passenger platform he fashioned out of an old shoebox. He finished the scene by adding extra Plasticville fencing.

MY GREATEST FIND



This page from Lionel's consumer catalog for 1939 illustrates the two superb passenger sets the author has collected, starting with a complete No. 267W *Flying Yankee*. He recently acquired a pristine and boxed No. 299W *City of Denver*.

If it's too good to be true, it still may be true!

A GREATEST FIND OF A LIONEL PREWAR SET

STORY BY HOWARD JOHNSON

My primary interest has been collecting and operating Lionel trains from the postwar era. After all, I received my first set, the No. 1599 *Texas Special* freight train, for Christmas in 1958. Yet I've developed an interest in Lionel "art deco" passenger sets from the 1930s.

The spark for this interest was ignited by my wife, Lana, prodding me to look at "some really old trains" a friend of hers wanted to sell. I scoffed at the idea as I knew the trains had to be before the postwar era and so out of my interest zone.

I reluctantly told my wife that I would inspect the prewar trains. Lo and behold, to my surprise and satisfaction, there was a completely intact and barely run Lionel No. 267 *Flying Yankee* passenger set. It even had the set box and all component boxes, along with the instruction manual.

I'll always remember Lana's friend's statement, "Whatever the date of the newspaper used to pack the items is the last date this train was run." The *New York Times* newsprint was dated July 17, 1937.

I was hooked! I've come to appreciate those streamlined "art deco" trains as works of art, just as their different full-size counterparts were when they came upon the American railroading scene in the 1930s. For the past 20 years, I've been on a constant lookout for high-quality prewar passenger sets that still have their boxes, paperwork, and so forth.

GREATEST FIND

This introduction brings me to what I consider to be my greatest find in my many years in the hobby. To be sure, I thought the *Flying Yankee* held that honor. But a recent experience surpassed what

happened when my wife and I lived in Texas during the early 2000s.

About a year ago, while doing my daily search of eBay for interesting items, I noticed a Lionel No. 299W *City of Denver* passenger set was up for auction. While Lionel cataloged the 299W from 1936 through 1939, the example listed was the less-common version with the roof of each vestibule painted brown and not the usual yellow. Lionel had done this so that the vestibules matched in color the brown roof of each car.

My immediate concern could be summarized by the old adage, "If it's too good to be true, it probably is too good to be true." Specifically, I worried that the Lionel set was not original but instead had been repainted. Simply stated, the train looked almost new.

My concerns were somewhat mitigated by the auction listing having the set box and individual boxes all in great shape. I enlisted the help of Eric Lindquist, a member of my local train club, to scrutinize the pictures. Once he concluded that the set was original, I decided to bid on it with an intent to win. And that, to my joy, is exactly what happened.

ANTICIPATED ARRIVAL

Upon arrival (after a lot of nervous pacing during the wait), the prewar set looked better than what I had imagined. I could not have been more pleased with its condition. Not a scratch on any of the vestibules! Inside the box was the original Lionel inspection card.

Once I had realized the eBay seller was an antiques shop in my home state of Wisconsin, I decided to contact the store to learn how it had obtained such a gem. The manager told me that an elderly gentleman had walked in one day to sell the set, saying it had been run only a few times. He had bought the set anticipating that he and his wife would have children. That did not happen, and therefore the set was rarely operated.

The manager added that the set had been in their inventory for a couple of years before they had decided to list it on eBay. His admission left me even more thankful and amazed that I had been able to obtain this wonderful passenger set for my collection.

This experience confirms my belief that "good stuff" is still out there. In this case, in which it appeared to be too good to be true, it turns out it really was true! CTT

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Aug 2 Wheaton, IL - DuPage County Fair
Aug 8-9 Edison, NJ - New Jersey Expo Center
Sep 13 Wheaton, IL - DuPage County Fair
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Oct 17-18 Fredericksburg, VA - Convention Center
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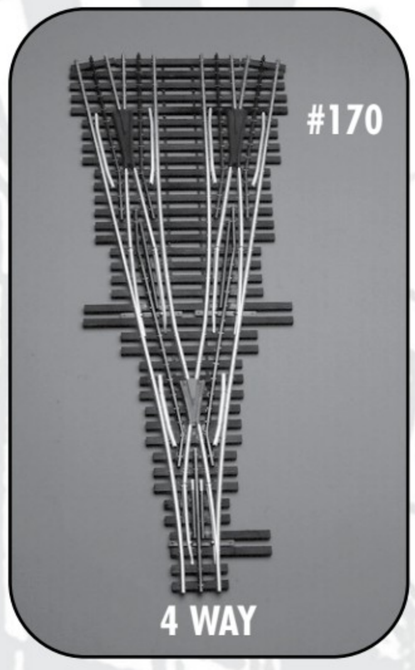
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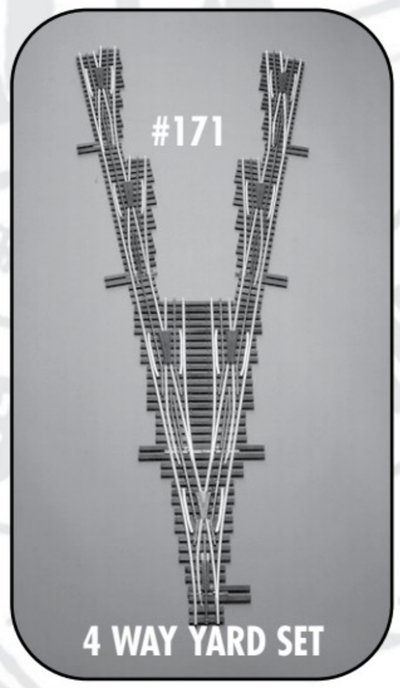
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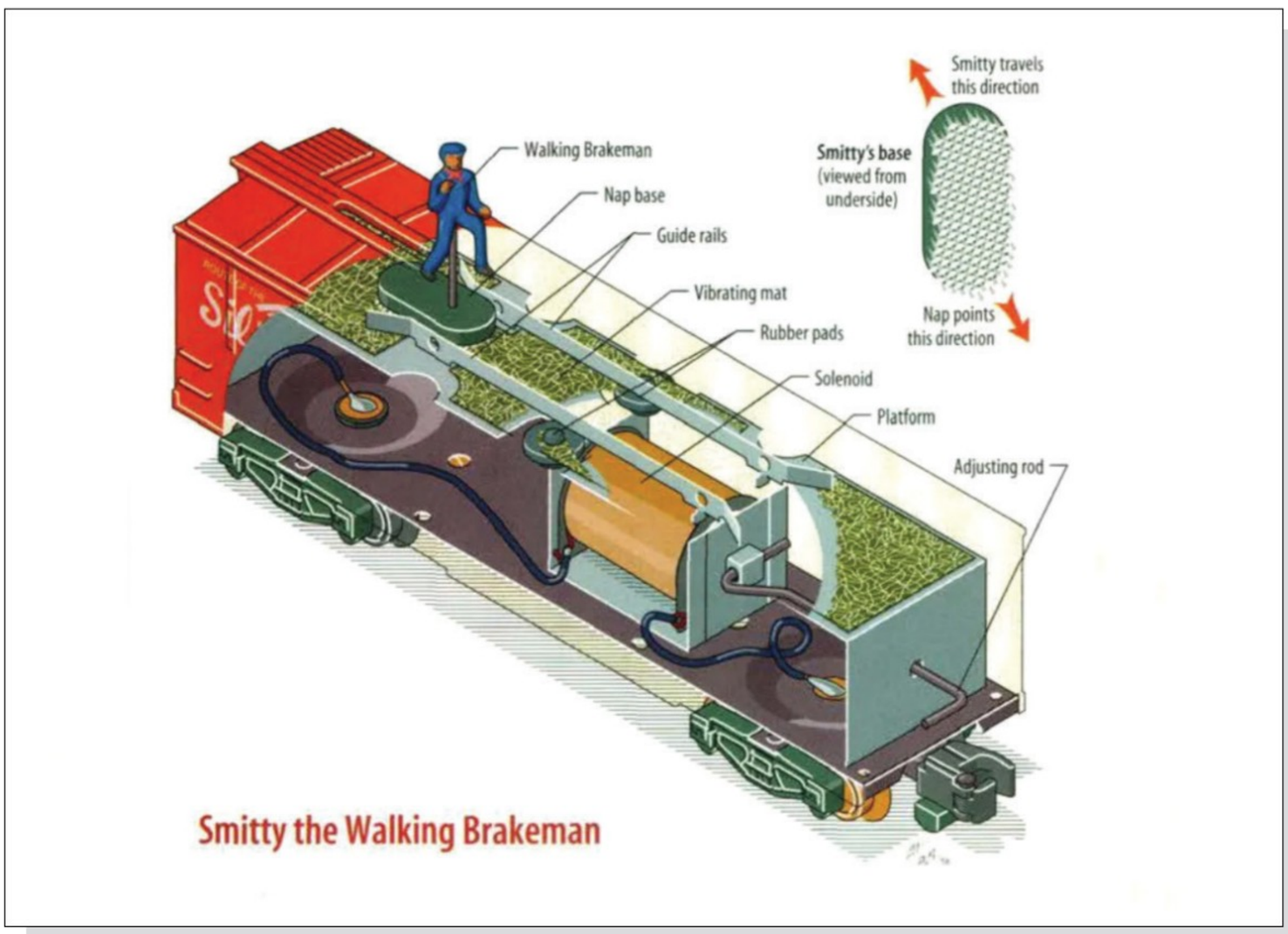
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BY CARL SWANSON

American Flyer's Walking Brakeman Car

SMITTY'S MECHANISM STOPPED FUNCTIONING

Q I have an American Flyer Walking Brakeman Car. I can't figure out how to get the brakeman to walk. I can't even figure out how to get the body off the S gauge boxcar without breaking it. Can you offer some help? — *John Mascitelli*



Smitty the Walking Brakeman

A Smitty the Walking Brakeman first appeared in 1956, pacing back and forth on the roofwalk of American Flyer's No. 970 Seaboard Air Line RR boxcar. In 1958, Smitty signed on with the Denver & Rio Grande Western, where his white "Cookie Box" car was numbered 25049. He retired from the catalog in 1960, but remains an eye-catching figure on Flyer layouts.

Like most operating accessories of the era, the Walking Brakeman's operation is simple and its mechanism is fairly robust. The blue figure is press-fit on a pin extending through the slot on the car's roof. A fabric pad is at the other end of the pin, and it rests on a vibrating fabric-covered platform inside the car. Cranking up the power causes the platform to buzz fiercely, and Smitty starts his somewhat jittery stroll down the roof. Guardrails on the vibrating platform keep him on the straight and narrow. At the ends of the car, the guardrails widen, therby allowing Smitty to about-face and march back down the rooftop.

Let's narrow down the issue with your boxcar. First, we need to see if power is getting where it needs to be. Place the car on the track and crank up the juice. You should hear a noticeable buzzing. If silence reigns (and you're sure the car is solidly on the rails), clean the wheel-and-axle assemblies and make sure they are set properly in the truck frame. Also be sure to clean the contact springs.

No luck? Then it's time to dig deeper. Slip Smitty from his pin, remove the four brass pins that hold the plastic shell to the car's chassis, and lift the shell away. Check for broken wires and clean the magnet coil assembly.

If the car buzzes and Smitty continues being stubborn, keep the power on and adjust the mechanism by turning the rod that protrudes from the end of the car (see the illustration on this page) to find the vibration rate that works best. While you're at it, inspect the two black rubber pads that connect the solenoid to the vibrating platform. You can glue the pads with silicone adhesive if necessary.

Replacing the fabric often fixes issues with the walking boxcar. It's the same slant-nap fabric Gilbert used in its No. 771/No. 23771 Operating Stock Yard. Consult your local hobby retailer or check out the "Need parts?" feature in the Fall 2025 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*.

Remove the old fabric and use it as a template to cut out new pieces. Heavy shears will do the trick, as would a sharp hobby knife. Attach the fabric with contact cement or a very thin, even layer of silicone adhesive. The nap on Smitty's pad should face the opposite direction from the figure's intended direction of travel.

Now you can reassemble the car, slide Smitty back in place, tell him break time's over, and send him on his way!



LIONEL RAILSOUNDS TENDER

Q Around 2006, when I was getting back into the hobby, I bought a few Lionel starter sets, some of which had RailSounds. One of the RailSounds tenders worked well for a few years and then the whistle began to sound sporadically as the train went around the track. All the sound features work as they should when the tender is not moving; the chuffing sound begins when the tender starts moving; and the intermittent whistle sound still occurs. I'm wondering what will be required to fix something like this. — *Noah Theodore*

A In the early to mid-2000s, sound-equipped Lionel starter sets transitioned from "conventional" RailSounds 4.0 to the newer TrainSounds system. TrainSounds tenders sometimes had an issue with erratic whistle effects that could be cured by operating the engine with a lighted locomotive, an illuminated passenger car, or lighted track bumpers. This modest addition to the power draw often addressed the issue.

If you attempt that solution and still have problems, there is a reset procedure you can try. Power down for three to five seconds, wait for the air-release sound, and then restart.

Diagnosing issues with electronics without seeing the actual circuit boards is an exercise in guesswork and 20-year-old circuit boards can become flaky. Good luck!

POWERING IVES TINPLATE

Q I own an Ives Wide gauge tinplate toy train with the original transformer that is more than 100 years old. Should I use it to power the train or would I be better off getting a replacement transformer? — *Bill Gingerich*

A The very earliest Ives trains operated on DC. Powering one of these ancient locomotives would require a rectifier or a properly configured DC power pack. However, the majority of Ives trains are AC and, lacking information to the contrary, I'll talk about those.

I really enjoy tearing down, diagnosing, and reassembling toy train devices. However, I don't mess with the innards of anything that plugs into a 120-volt outlet. Frankly, neither should you!

My choice would be to retire the antique transformer in favor of a modern AC toy train transformer. You will need one with a fairly substantial power output. Good choices in that range include MTH's No. Z-4000 and Lionel's new ZW. Both supply plenty of electrical encouragement to get your Wide gauge train back on the job. Best of all, modern transformers have modern circuit protection.

That being said, there are people who restore vintage transformers. If you want to explore that route, your local hobby shop may know a trustworthy specialist. Or you can check with some of the dealers listed in the directory in the back of each issue of CTT.

MEET CARL

Carl Swanson retired after a 40-year career in newspaper and magazine publishing, including a 12-year stint as editor of *Classic Toy Trains* (2007 through 2019). Direct your questions about toy trains to Carl in care of editor@classictoytrains.com

READER TIPS

FLYER RECORD SOUND QUALITY

Your advice about the American Flyer Talking Station on page 18 of the Fall 2025 issue involved cleaning the record. But doing so is difficult because of the small exposed surface area. I inherited a station that also sounded bad. Replacing the old needle with a new one bought on eBay dramatically improved the sound quality. If the record surface is damaged, there is a duplicate announcement on the back of the record. Turning the record over made it sound like new. – *Peter Williams*

FIXES FOR TRANSFORMER SCHEMATICS

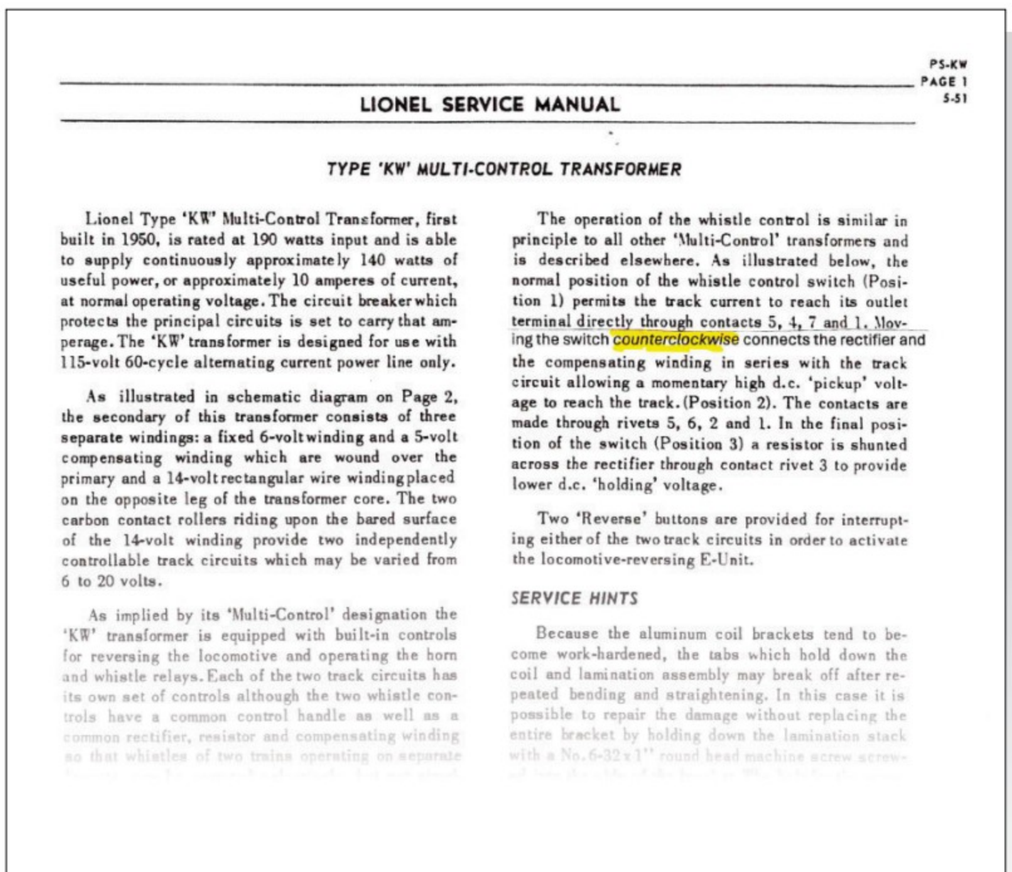
About four years ago I was given a Lionel No. 18018 Southern Ry. 2-8-2 Mikado. This locomotive included a Lionel No. 5906 Controller to activate the bell. When wired per instructions with vintage Lionel transformers, such as a KW or a ZW, the 5906 is designed to sound the bell and the transformer sounds the whistle.

However, that was not the case. After research on various Internet forums, I discovered the schematics for the Lionel KW and ZW transformers have an error. The diode orientation as depicted in the schematic is incorrect — it mistakenly was reversed.

This was not a problem when the original part, selenium discs, were available. You jusy purchased the part and installed it as directed. However, this part is no longer available, and only modern diodes are available. When installed per the schematic, the diode will create a negative DC bias on the track AC versus the desired positive DC bias.

Based on my research, I revised the schematic to correctly depict the diode orientation. With this change, when the 5906-controller combined with a KW or ZW is employed, the bell and whistle operate properly.

I have included the original instructions (2024-05-24 Revised KW *Lionel Service Manual*, excerpt printed below). I corrected an error in the description on page one of the document: the switch movement is counter-clockwise and not clockwise. – *Jim Moritz*



PS-KW
PAGE 1
5-51

LIONEL SERVICE MANUAL

TYPE 'KW' MULTI-CONTROL TRANSFORMER

Lionel Type 'KW' Multi-Control Transformer, first built in 1950, is rated at 190 watts input and is able to supply continuously approximately 140 watts of useful power, or approximately 10 amperes of current, at normal operating voltage. The circuit breaker which protects the principal circuits is set to carry that amperage. The 'KW' transformer is designed for use with 115-volt 60-cycle alternating current power line only.

As illustrated in schematic diagram on Page 2, the secondary of this transformer consists of three separate windings: a fixed 6-volt winding and a 5-volt compensating winding which are wound over the primary and a 14-volt rectangular wire winding placed on the opposite leg of the transformer core. The two carbon contact rollers riding upon the bared surface of the 14-volt winding provide two independently controllable track circuits which may be varied from 6 to 20 volts.

As implied by its 'Multi-Control' designation the 'KW' transformer is equipped with built-in controls for reversing the locomotive and operating the horn and whistle relays. Each of the two track circuits has its own set of controls although the two whistle controls have a common control handle as well as a common rectifier, resistor and compensating winding so that whistles of two trains operating on separate

The operation of the whistle control is similar in principle to all other 'Multi-Control' transformers and is described elsewhere. As illustrated below, the normal position of the whistle control switch (Position 1) permits the track current to reach its outlet terminal directly through contacts 5, 4, 7 and 1. Moving the switch counterclockwise connects the rectifier and the compensating winding in series with the track circuit allowing a momentary high d.c. 'pickup' voltage to reach the track. (Position 2). The contacts are made through rivets 5, 6, 2 and 1. In the final position of the switch (Position 3) a resistor is shunted across the rectifier through contact rivet 3 to provide lower d.c. 'holding' voltage.

Two 'Reverse' buttons are provided for interrupting either of the two track circuits in order to activate the locomotive-reversing E-Unit.

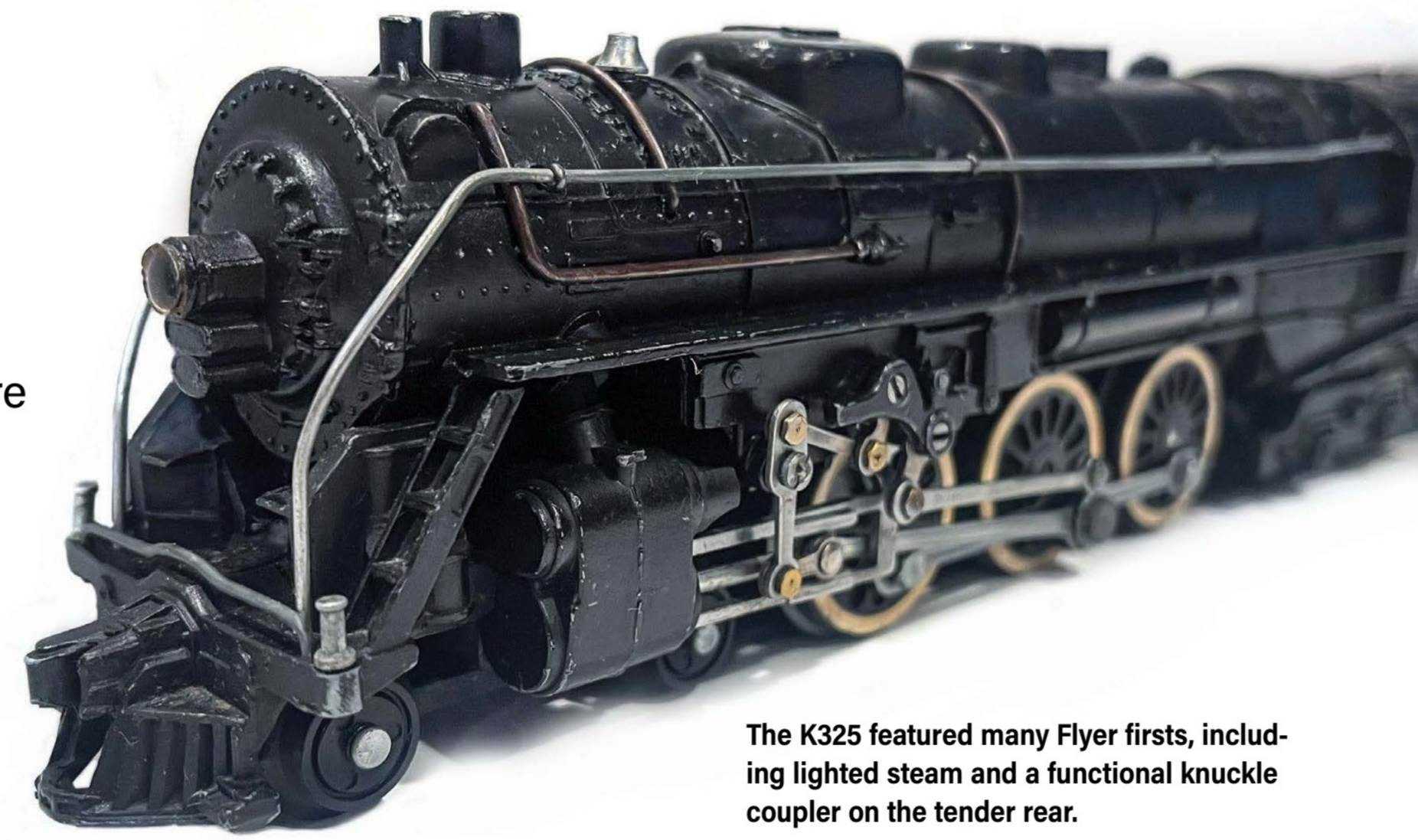
SERVICE HINTS

Because the aluminum coil brackets tend to become work-hardened, the tabs which hold down the coil and lamination assembly may break off after repeated bending and straightening. In this case it is possible to repair the damage without replacing the entire bracket by holding down the lamination stack with a No. 6-32 x 1" round head machine screw screw-

Gilbert American Flyer No. K325 Hudson

This 1952 engine features illuminated smoke and much more

STORY AND PHOTO BY MARK SUEK



The K325 featured many Flyer firsts, including lighted steam and a functional knuckle coupler on the tender rear.

What toy train locomotive means the most to you?

My favorite A.C. Gilbert American Flyer S gauge locomotive is the No. K325 Hudson steamer from 1952. It is a most impressive, accurate, and interesting model of a J-class steam locomotive, commonly associated with the New York Central System.

The K325 4-6-4 is (along with the No. K335 4-8-4 Northern) the first Gilbert locomotive to feature a fully functional knuckle coupler on the tender's rear. What's more, it was the first locomotive to have illuminated ("glowing") smoke.

The earliest of the K325 Hudsons, a one-year-only manufacture, included a knuckle coupler, attached to the rear tender truck with a rivet, as part of set No. K5206W. The other knuckle coupler set that year was K5210W, headed by the aforementioned K335 Northern. Research indicates only the Hudson set featured the early-style tender coupler. Later 1952 versions of the K325 were made with the same, more familiar, later-style couplers as the K335.

Gilbert achieved the lighted smoke effect by placing a clear plastic tube in the smokestack in place of the usual brass unit. Light from the working headlight bulb underneath would shine upward through the stack and illuminate the smoke as it exited. As is the case with many A.C. Gilbert Co. American Flyer steam locomotives, the smoke unit on my K325 blows impressive rings of smoke, which certainly enhanced the lighted smoke effect!

Other notable features of the K325 are Flyer's "choo-choo" sound (located in the boiler), an air-chime whistle and reversing unit in the tender, and a New York Central System herald contained within a small oval on the upper front corner of the tender sides. As with most other Flyer steam locomotives of the time, there is a metal bell, ample metal handrail detail, metal flagstaffs, die-cast metal trucks under the boiler cab and tender, and, of course, whitewalls on the driver wheels.

THE K325 WAS THE FIRST LOCOMOTIVE TO FEATURE ILLUMINATED SMOKE.

With regard to the die-cast tender trucks, the center axle of the six-wheel design was removed at the factory and replaced with sliding shoe contacts (one on each truck) in an effort to provide improved function of the whistle. The effectiveness of this effort is a matter of opinion or taste.

HOW DID YOU ACQUIRE IT AND WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL?

In addition to its "firsts" in the Flyer line, the K325 holds a special place in my collection because of how it was acquired.

The elegant Hudson came into my possession at an estate auction in Parkersburg, W.Va., near my home. The auctioneer's assistant turned out to be my great aunt Tootie's next-door neighbor in Elkins, a historic railroad town a few hours to the east.

My great aunt's name came from the fact that she enjoyed hearing the Western Maryland steam locomotives blowing their whistles when making stops at the station in Elkins and signaling at the various crossings and bridges.

This chance meeting also led to the acquisition of other Flyer pieces from my maternal family's hometown as well as a Western Maryland coal shovel, rescued from underneath my great aunt's home by this same gracious neighbor. CTT

Lionel Legacy Train Master

Few diesel locomotives in model railroading provoke nostalgia like an EMD F3 unit. That being said, I'd say the Fairbanks-Morse Train Master is a close second.

First offered in O gauge by Lionel in 1954, the massive six-axle road switcher provided hobbyists with diverse uses on nearly any kind of layout. The Train Master model was most recently offered in the 2025 Big Book catalog with full Legacy Command Control and a variety of new road names.

The Train Master was produced by Fairbanks-Morse (FM) from 1953 through 1957 and was classified as H-24-66. This classification comes from H for "hood," 24 for 2,400 horsepower, and 66 for the six traction motors on six axles. That amount of horsepower made the Train Master the most powerful locomotive of the time, a much-needed designation to compete with the successful models available from EMD and Alco.

Fairbanks-Morse manufactured 127 Train Masters for 10 different railroads.

OUT OF THE BOX

When the Train Masters joined the Reading, they were the longest and heaviest diesel locomotives that railroad had at the time. This unit, No. 801, was one of the original two to enter the roster. Our review model is Lionel No. 2533711 in Reading paint, thus highlighting the early dieselization of the Reading fleet.

Our model is 19 inches in length, which is 2½" too long (in 1:48 scale) compared to the prototype's 66-foot length. Equipped with all the Legacy features we've come to expect, the unit has five horn and bell variations, fan-driven smoke, Bluetooth for smart device control, and LED lighting.

ON THE TRACK

Both front and rear Electro-Couplers, powered by two flywheel motors, can be engaged remotely. The axles on both trucks have flanged wheels, and the inner axle on each truck has a traction tire. While testing this locomotive with a heavy train, the traction tire gripped and lifted up the front axle slightly, which could cause a derailing issue. However, I noticed this issue only when pulling a heavy consist. With all axles flanged, this model requires O-54 curves for operation.

The rear fan detailing on this model stands out due to the recessed and angled fan units. Because of this detail, the control panel is located under another access hatch. Find it by removing the panel just behind the front roof fan.





Road specific details for the different models include bell and horn placement, headlight arrangement, and engineer orientation, with some units set up for long hood forward and others reversed. Due to the Train Master's boxy design, add-on detailing is minimal, but it does include handrails, truck and pilot detailing, and under-chassis tank details. There are legible builder's and warning plates on the ABS body.

There are six road names with two cab numbers each: Central of New Jersey (Nos. 2533671, 2533672), Chicago & North Western (Nos. 2533681, 2533682), Milwaukee Road (Nos. 2533691, 2533692), Pennsylvania RR (Nos. 2533701, 2533702), Reading (Nos. 2533711, 2533712), and Southern Pacific (Nos. 2533721, 2533722).

Lionel offers a "postwar inspired" set (No. 2522080) with a Lackawanna Train Master and freight cars. Custom runs have been done for the Metropolitan Division of the Train Collectors Association (Nos. 2501410 Santa Fe warbonnet and 2501470 CNJ) as well as Mr. Muffin's Trains (No. 2533980 Norfolk & Western). — *Chris Montagna*

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

LIONEL LEGACY TRAIN MASTER (NO. 2533711)

Features: Legacy, TrainMaster, and conventional operation; Bluetooth control; Lionel Voice Control; quilling horn; fan-driven smoke unit; lighted cab interior; front and rear marker lights; O-54 operation
Road names: Central RR of New Jersey, Chicago & North Western, Milwaukee Road, Norfolk & Western, Pennsylvania RR, Reading, Santa Fe, Southern Pacific
MSRP: $747.99
Website: lionel.com

Atlas O Premier U30C diesel locomotive

The U30C was General Electric's best-selling U-boat. Between 1966 and 1976, approximately 600 units were built for more than 20 railroads. The 3,000-hp diesel was meant to move heavy freight, so it's no surprise the locomotives were popular coal haulers in the 1970s and into the '80s.

Few U30Cs survived; many were stripped or rebuilt. One remains at the Illinois Railway Museum (BN No. 5383).

Atlas has introduced an O gauge Premier model of this popular diesel locomotive. Our review sample is Guilford (Ex-Detroit Edison) No. 640. The prototype was built in 1972, one of 11 units purchased by Detroit Edison.



ATLAS O PREMIER U30C DIESEL LOCOMOTIVE (NO. 3018502)

Features: Proto-Sound 3.0, onboard DCC/DCS decoder, O-42 operation, opening ProtoSmoke diesel exhaust, 3-rail/2-rail convertible, LED lighted cab and number boards, 2 remote-controlled Proto-Couplers

Road names: Delaware & Hudson, Detroit Edison, Guilford (Ex-Detroit Edison), Rock Island, Soo Line, Union Pacific

MSRP: $679.95

Website: shop.atlasrr.com

OUT OF THE BOX

The O gauge model is packed with 10 pieces of foam (yes, I counted) used to protect the handrails, trucks, and more.

This model looks terrific! The patched-out paint scheme is nicely done. I found just a couple of prototype photos for comparison. The horizontal blue stripe was quite faded in those photos, as was the number. I realize these are nitpicky details as the locomotive wasn't new when purchased. Any modeler wishing to capture the flavor of a "repurposed" model would likely want to add some degree of weathering anyway.

All the handrails' paint matched prototype photos, including the white rails on the front and rear of the unit.

You access the DCS/DCC, volume controls and two-rail/three-rail conversion controls under the screen on the roof's rear. The hatch was easy to remove and put back into place. The rear face of the locomotive has backup and marker lighting, illuminated number boards, and add-on grab irons leading to the roof.

The model is 17½ inches long and scales out to 70 feet in 1:48 scale. It's slightly oversized when compared to the prototype (which measured between 60 and 60.25 feet).

ON THE TRACK

As usual, you're advised to read the instruction booklet before operating the locomotive. I lubricated the appropriate locations and added smoke fluid before initial operation.

For testing, I used an MTH No. Z-4000 transformer with the WTIU system, using the MTH app on my smartphone. (For more information on using this system, read the MTH Shay review in the Summer 2024 issue.) It immediately scanned and found the locomotive and added it to my roster so I could begin operation. (Note: Remember to log on to the WTIU's Wi-Fi network first.)

This model was a smooth operator and very responsive to the throttle. It crawled along at 2 smph, something you don't always see in O gauge/scale locomotives. I pushed the speed up to 60 smph. It likely could have done more, but I didn't want to risk causing a derailment or a spill onto the floor. The GE prototypes maxed out at 64-70 mph, although they weren't built to maintain high speeds.

The Proto-Sound 3.0 sound system was great and quite robust. In fact, I had to stop the engine and use a screwdriver to decrease the volume so I wouldn't bother our office neighbors. The diesel exhaust smoke worked, and the amount of exhaust seemed appropriate to me.

The illuminated rear number boards (using light-emitting diodes) looked nice. Today's technology allows for additional detail lighting without drawing more current.

I had no operational problems; the model ran flawlessly on our layout's FasTrack and O-48 turnouts. MTH suggests O-42 curves for operation; given the three-axle trucks, I would not recommend anything tighter.

Overall, it was a pleasure to set up and run this O gauge U30C diesel. If you have a 1960-80s-themed railroad or a coal (or other type of) mining line, or you just like U-boats, check out this model. You'll enjoy operating it as much as I did. — *Rene Schweitzer*

MTH RailKing Galloping Goose railbus



Cody Grivno photo

The "Galloping Goose" railbuses were built by the Rio Grande Southern in the 1930s as a less expensive way to haul mail, passengers, and light freight. They used automobile or truck engines with freight containers and ran on narrow gauge track. A Galloping Goose railbus not only cost less to operate but it also was much lighter. As a result, it caused less wear and tear on the track.

Railbus Nos. 1, 2, and 6 were built with two trucks, with the rear truck powered on both axles. The other four units had three trucks and were articulated, similar to a tractor trailer, with the second truck powered. Seven units were built, and they operated until 1952. Six of them have been preserved.

OUT OF THE BOX

MTH first released its O gauge version of the Galloping Goose around 2008, with the last run in 2013. This late 2025 version offers updated Proto-Sound 3.0 (versus 2.0, though some 2013 versions had 3.0) and multiple road names, including a custom run from Mr. Muffin's Trains.

MTH RAILKING GALLOPING GOOSE RAILBUS (NO. 30-21309)

Features: Proto-Sound 3.0, O-27 operation, onboard DCC receiver, locomotive speed control

Road names: Christmas (No. 30-21321), Denver & Rio Grande (No. 30-21310), Halloween (No. 30-21320), Maryland & Pennsylvania (No. 30-21308), Railway Express (No. 30-21309), Rio Grande Southern (Nos. 30-21306, 30-21307), U.S. Army (Mr. Muffin's Trains No. 30-21315), Western Maryland (No. 30-21311)

MSRP: $354.95

Website: mthtrains.com

Our sample is the Railway Express Agency Galloping Goose No. 12 (No. 30-21309), a three-truck railbus.

This O gauge model is oversized compared to the prototype. The longest Galloping Goose was 29 feet long, so in 1:48 the model should measure around 7.5 inches. MTH's model measures 11 inches, making it more of a large scale model (about 1:26)!

Still, the model captures the essence of the Goose when viewed with the prototype photos I found. The paint and graphics are crisp and legible, plus I found no flaws in the paint. The model has two LED headlights but no rear lighting. The trucks have spoked wheels to match the prototype.

ON THE TRACK

Before operating the model, the instructions advise lubricating the axles and pickup rollers. I set it in a foam cradle and used LaBelle Lubricants No. 108 plastic-compatible oil for this, applying only a tiny drop to each area.

Trains.com's Lucas Iverson and I tested the railbus on our in-house layout, the City Terminal & Transfer (CT&T). We started testing with the MTH WTIU system powered by an MTH Z-4000 transformer, using the MTH smartphone app. The app scanned and found the railbus immediately. The headlights came on, and the sound system began once I applied the throttle.

The average speed of the prototype was 15-25 mph, with a maximum of 40 mph. I pushed the MTH model to 50 scale mph, and it likely would have gone faster. The railbus was smooth and responsive to the throttle.

The headlights remained on in forward and reverse. As the Galloping Goose isn't meant to haul cars, there are no couplers. The model navigated all the turnouts on the CT&T with ease. MTH suggests O-27 operation, which means the Goose will navigate just about any layout.

I tested out sounds in the app. There were more options than I expected, but the engine and the sound effects do not match the prototype.

Lucas and I also tested the railbus conventionally using a Z-4000. Again, we had no issues and it worked great.

This is a nice model that's easy to run either via the app or conventionally. I would love to see MTH update the sound system with a Galloping Goose engine/sound effects.

If you have a western-themed railroad or a small layout, or you just like quirky motive power, you're going to want one of these new MTH railbuses.— *Rene*

MTH Premier 70' streamlined passenger car set

Since the return of MTH's Premier Norfolk & Western Ry. J-class 4-8-4s in 2025, it seemed obvious that 70-foot streamlined passenger cars wouldn't be far behind. They were offered in four-, two-, and single-car sets. This review focuses on the O gauge four-car set (No. 20-64263).

OUT OF THE BOX

The set includes one baggage car, two coaches, and one rounded observation. Each car measures approximately 18 inches in length and weighs 1 pound, 12 ounces, with the baggage car being 2 ounces lighter.

Even after all these years, the superb 70-foot passenger car tooling from MTH holds up. The separately applied metal grab irons pop across the smooth-sided, ABS bodies. Molded-in details, such as the riveting on the roof, look great. The detailing for both the undercarriage and four-wheel trucks remains solid.

The famous Tuscan red of the N&W can be inconsistent across different products and manufacturers. The color on these cars appears to be spot on. The red is consistent even when hooked up to the Premier 18-inch dome car from 2004. However, the gold stripe, letters, and numbers on the older dome appear brighter than on the new cars.

I was pleasantly surprised to see the various cars, minus the baggage car, come with figures strategically placed to create scenes inside. Most figures seem to be from Atlas O, not unexpected given the collaboration between the firms. This is a bonus, as Atlas O figures are well-detailed and offer a range of civilian and uniformed service people.

You can add more figures by disassembling the models. You'll find a few screws on the underside, varying by car type. Thanks to MTH's contact spring base and board, the body and frame can be taken apart without worrying about unplugging wires.

ON THE TRACK

The 18-inch length offers the advantage of navigating tighter curves compared to the 21-inch counterparts. MTH recommends an O-42 curve minimum for operation. They performed well on the *Classic Toy Trains*' City Terminal & Transfer layout, which features O-48 curves. The operation, however, was slow due to clearance issues through the tunnel and required care to ensure the cars' diaphragms didn't catch on each other.

Obviously, these models were made to replicate the high speeds of the N&W's hot-shot *Powhatan Arrow* and *Pocahontas* trains. This type of performance was tested at the Milwaukee Lionel Railroad Club, where the cars ran very well behind the J-Class No. 611. The trucks held firm to the rails as the train glided along the minimum O-72 curves and across switches.

Each car is equipped with flicker-free, LED interior lighting. The warm white light offers an intensity that won't blind you when looking through the shaded windows. The observation sports LEDs for the tail and marker lights, as well as the drumhead.

These 70' cars look great, operate well, especially on tighter curves, and come at a reasonable price. This set, or any other Premier 70' passenger set from MTH, is a solid choice. — *Lucas Iverson*



MTH 70' PASSENGER CARS

Features: Undercarriage and truck details; LED lighting; O-42 operation
MSRP: $515.95
Website: mthtrains.com

American Flyer Esslinger's Beer Boxcar

Beer-hauling boxcars are always popular in the model railroad world (especially toy trains), thanks to their colorful, creative, and often historic schemes. For collectors focused on accuracy, these freight cars often offer prototypical designs.

In areas like Milwaukee and Chicago, replicas of beer cars are a guaranteed hit with modelers regardless of their scale. However, the appeal can easily find roots in different parts of the country, including the "City of Brotherly Love."

The Pennsylvania-based Train Collectors Association (TCA) has tapped into the historic Esslinger's brewery of Philadelphia for three custom runs. Namely, S gauge versions of steel-sided beer boxcars.

According to the TCA, the brewery was established in 1868 and was most famous for its "King Pin Lager Beer." Esslinger's advertising prominently featured an image of a waiter carrying a tray full of ice-cold, delicious King Pin.

The model utilizes a one-piece, plastic carbody that mostly features molded details, with a few notable exceptions: the separately painted brake wheel and the sliding side doors. The doors are fully functional, equipped with rotating latches to hold them in place, allowing modelers to slide them open for loading and unloading "precious cargo."

The boxcar sits on reliable American Flyer trucks with compatible wheels and couplers. The trucks pivot smoothly, the wheels are free rollers, and the knuckle couplers operate without fail.

To be sure, the undercarriage of the boxcar is notably bare. It features only the frame and the four body-mounted screws at each corner. However, this design offers a clean canvas for creative model railroaders who wish to add custom underbody detailing.

The most striking feature of this 1:64-scale model is the exceptional custom painting. The vibrant yellow across the car's sides really stands out. Against this backdrop, all of the neatly applied decals, in particular the Esslinger's iconic logo and the image of Mr. Waiter, instantly catch the eye. The necessary URT reporting marks are also clearly accounted for and fill in the scheme perfectly.

The TCA offers the Esslinger's model in two additional paint schemes besides the yellow: gray and white. Each S gauge boxcar is sold separately for $69.99 and comes with its own distinct road number.

If you want plenty of bang for your buck, especially if you're building a beer train or expanding your freight fleet, I recommend the three-car set for $199.99. — *Lucas*

AMERICAN FLYER ESSLINGER'S BEER BOXCAR

Features: Sliding side doors and working latches; American Flyer trucks with compatible wheels with couplers; three color schemes (gray, white, and yellow), each with its own distinct road number; Incorporated Esslinger logo, an image of "Mr. Waiter"; URT reporting marks

MSRP: $69.99 – $199.99 (for TCA members)

Website: tcatrains.org

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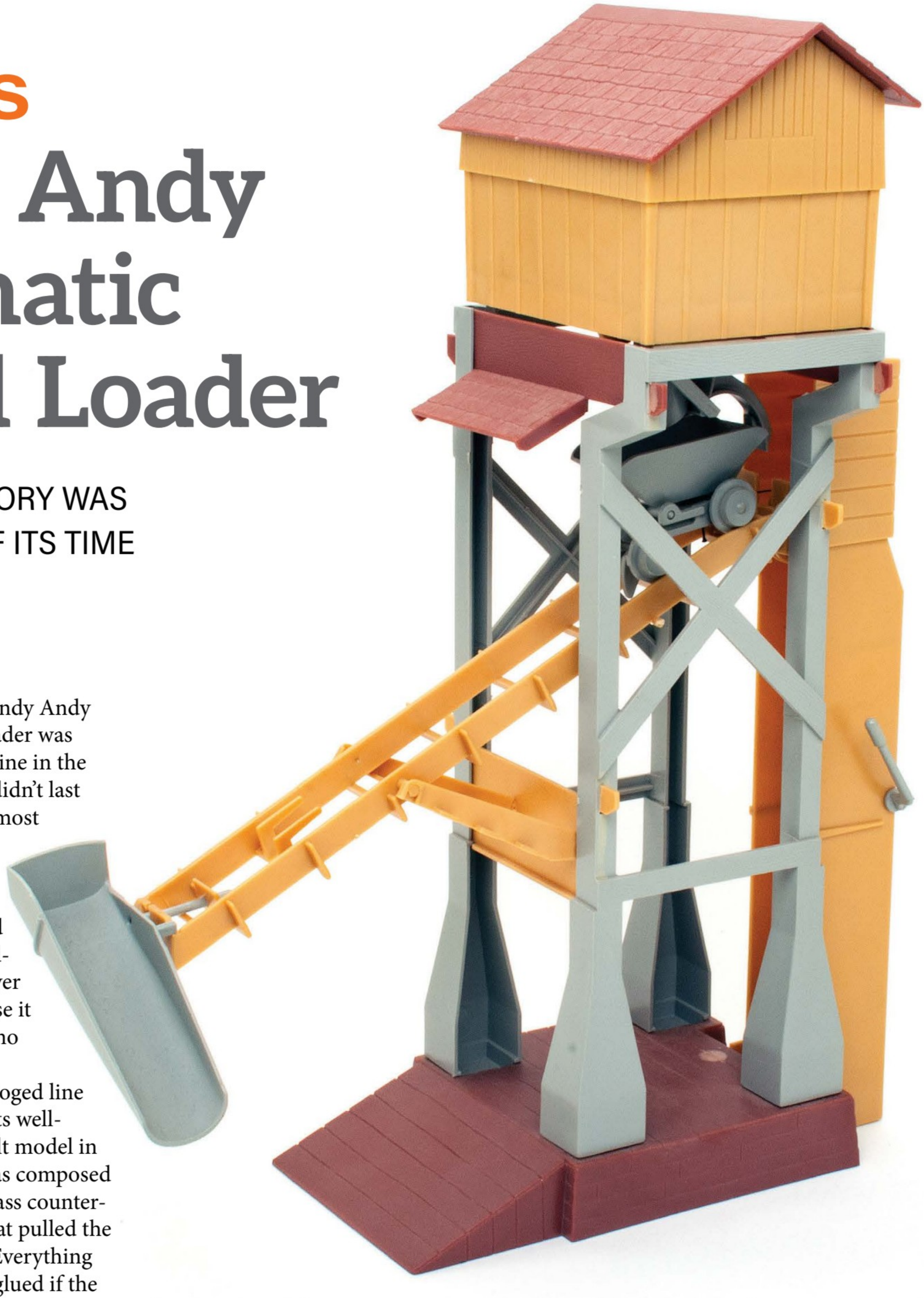
Cody Grivno photo

LIONEL'S

Sandy Andy Automatic Gravel Loader

THIS 1970S ACCESSORY WAS A FUN PRODUCT OF ITS TIME

STORY BY HAL MILLER



Lionel cataloged the No. 2175 Sandy Andy Automatic Gravel Loader from 1976 to 1979. This accessory used gravity to load and unload the ore truck into a waiting hopper car.

Cody Grivno photo

The Lionel No. 2175 Sandy Andy Automatic Gravel Loader was part of the cataloged line in the 1970s. It's a shame it didn't last longer because it's among the most interesting products the company ever made. It's not neat because of what it does; after all, Lionel produced numerous coal and gravel loading and dumping structures over the decades. It's notable because it did it (at least in theory) with no electricity.

The O scale kit hit the cataloged line in 1976 during the MPC era. Its well-illustrated box showed the built model in operation. As noted, the kit was composed of plastic parts, save for the brass counterweight and a piece of string that pulled the dump car back into position. Everything could be snapped together or glued if the user desired. The tower was reasonably robust, and the product as a whole was thoughtfully engineered.

HOW IT WORKS

The Sandy Andy loader is powered by physics. A small shelf on the rear of the tower holds the weight. When the shelf is flipped down, the weight drops and hauls the dump car up the incline via a pulley. The car moves a trigger tab connected to the loading spout cover. The gravel goes down the spout into the car.

Whenever the gravel spilling into the car becomes heavier than the weight, the trolley rolls back down the incline while the spout closes and shuts off the flow of product. At the end of the incline track, a set of stops engages the car axles and a trigger under it hits a cross member, pitching the car forward. The gravel empties into a trough, which directs the lading into an included plastic tub.

The empty car, now lighter than the counterweight, is then pulled back up the incline. This action trips the flow trigger and thereby begins the cycle anew.

Theoretically, the Sandy Andy can operate like this over and over until the bin at the top is empty. The roof comes off to refill the container with plastic "gravel."

NOT WITHOUT FLAWS

While conceptually sound, the accessory

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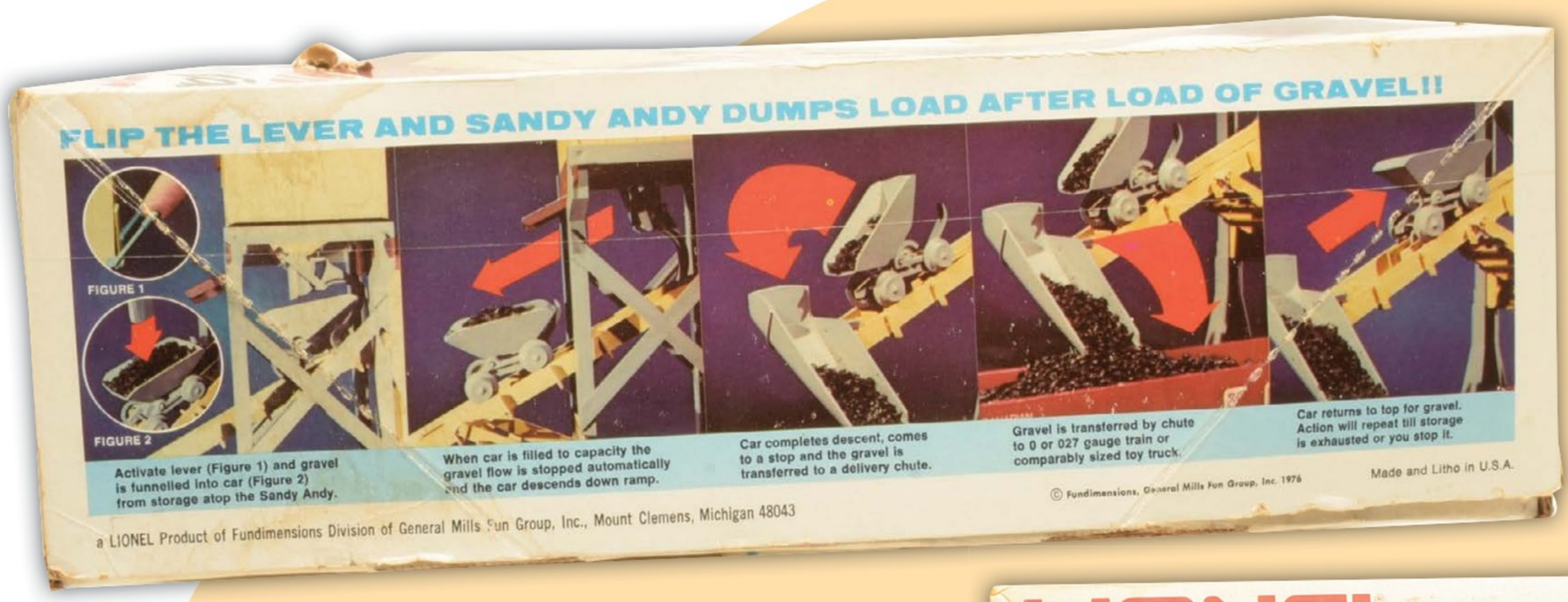
does have a few issues. For one thing, once it's together, taking it apart is a recipe for breakage. Second, like other coal-gravel loaders, there's a mess. There were places it happened: the loading spout and the dumping point. It's hard to tune the cart-string-pulley-weight mechanism to avoid spraying gravel everywhere.

The fact that there was no button, activation track, sound, or lighting probably was a factor in the demise of the Sandy Andy. Those features have been elements of Lionel accessories since the early days; the lack thereof made it a bit of an oddball.

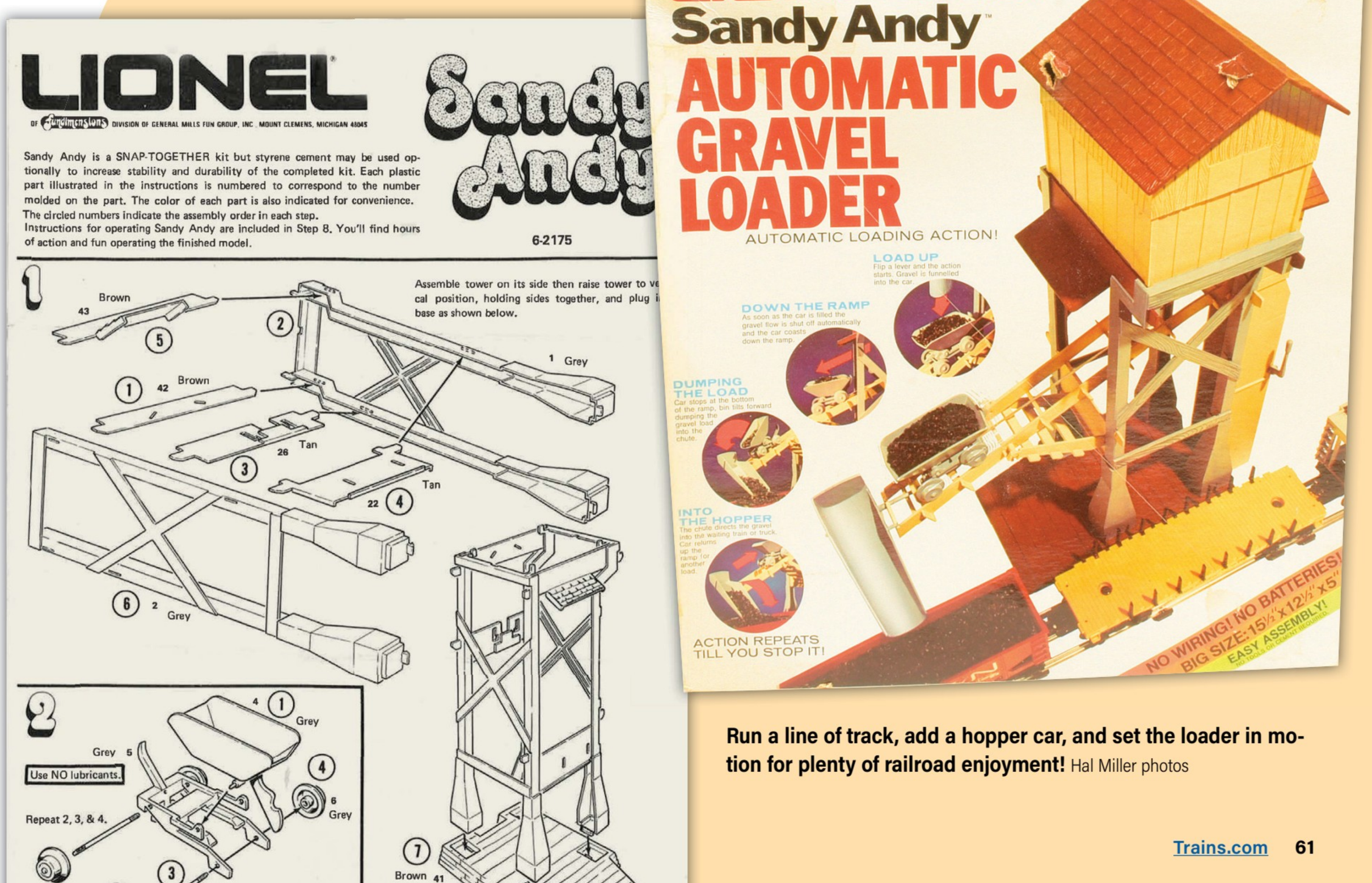
The last year the gravel loader appeared in a Lionel catalog was 1979. It's rumored that a whole line of Sandy Andy products was planned, but this loader was the only one that ever made it to market.

There must have been a fair number of Sandy Andy loaders sold, as you can still find them at swap meets and on online auction sits for anywhere between $20 and $50, depending on their condition. The 2027 edition of the *Greenberg's Pocket Price Guide to Lionel Trains* lists the price of the 2175 Sandy Andy at $34 in excellent condition and $55 in mint condition.

While many Lionel accessories have been brought back or reintroduced in improved form, the Sandy Andy Gravel Loader has been consigned to memory. If you were a kid who had one, it's probably a fun reminiscence. If you were the mom of that kid and had to pick the gravel out of your carpet, maybe not so much. CTT



The instruction sheet highlights the "snap together" nature of the product and advises against using any kind of lubricants.



Run a line of track, add a hopper car, and set the loader in motion for plenty of railroad enjoyment! Hal Miller photos

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Schedule of Events

IA, ELKADER: 14th Annual Elkader Model Train Show-Swap Meet. Sunday, August 16, 2026, 10:00am-3:30pm. NEW LOCATION: Moyna Building, 206 Johnson St., Elkader, IA 52043. Adults $5, children 6-12 $2, under 5 FREE. Free parking, lunch stand available. Information: Larry Lerch, 563-880-2066 or 563-880-4241

MA, TAUNTON: OLD COLONY MODEL RAILROAD CLUB ANNUAL MODEL RAILROAD SHOW. Sunday, September 20, 2026, 10:00am-3:00pm. Taunton Inn & Conference Center, 700 Myles Standish Blvd., Taunton, MA 02780. Route 495, Exit 25. Admission: $5.00, under 12 (accompanied by an adult) FREE. All gauge show, operating layout and test track. For more information contact: rickcross749@gmail.com

MO, JOPLIN: Joplin History & Mineral Museum Model Train Show and Swap Meet. Saturday, July 18, 2026, 9am-3pm. In Schifferdecker Park, 504 South Schifferdecker Ave., Joplin, MO 64801. Admission: $5 adult, 12 and under admitted free with paid adult. Swap Tables $20 each. Contact: Gary Potter at 405-541-0162, or email JoplinMRR@gmail.com

NJ, BRICK: ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents The Brick Train Show. Elks Lodge, 2491 Hooper Avenue, Brick, NJ 08723. Sunday, August 16, 2026, 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: $7.00; under 12 free with adult. John LaLima 732-845-5966. Go to www.eastcoasttrainparts.com and click on The Brick Show.

NJ, WAYNE: ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents The Wayne Train Show. P.A.L. Hall, 1 Pal Drive, Wayne, NJ 07470. Sunday, August 23, 2026, 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: $7.00; under 12 free with adult. John LaLima 732-845-5966. Go to www.eastcoasttrainparts.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. September 13, 2026, November 8, 2026, January 3, 2027 and February 7, 2027. 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, STILLWATER: Heartland Summer Toy Train Show. July 10-11, 2026. Friday 5pm-7pm, Saturday 9am-3pm. Admission: Adult $10, kids 12 and under Free with paid adult. Payne County Fairgrounds Expo Center. 4518 Expo Circle E., Stillwater, OK 74075. Buy/Sell/Trade. Layouts, Vendor tables, Concessions. Sponsored by the Heartland Toy Train Association. For further information visit: www.heartlandtoytrain.org

PA, MECHANICSBURG: Williams Grove Historical Steam Engine Association's Train & Toy Show. June 19-21, 2026. Friday 5pm-9pm, Saturday 9am-4pm, Sunday 9am-12pm (Father's Day Pancake Breakfast 8-10am). 1 Steam Engine Hill. Free Admission. Operating PRR 643 Steam Locomotive & Diesel Engine 52. Trains & Farm Toy Vendors - Model Railroad Display - Food Vendors. Visit: www.wghsea.org

WI, ONALASKA: Rail Fair, Omni Center, 255 Riders Club Road. Saturday, July 18, 2026, 10am-4pm. Admission $8.00, under 12 free with adult. Railroad Show–Flea Market–Swap Meet. BUY/SELL/TRADE. Model, Toy & Antique Trains & Memorabilia, Railroad Exhibits & Displays. Information: 4000 Foundation, PO Box 3411, La Crosse, WI 54602, 608-498-9522. www.4000foundation.org

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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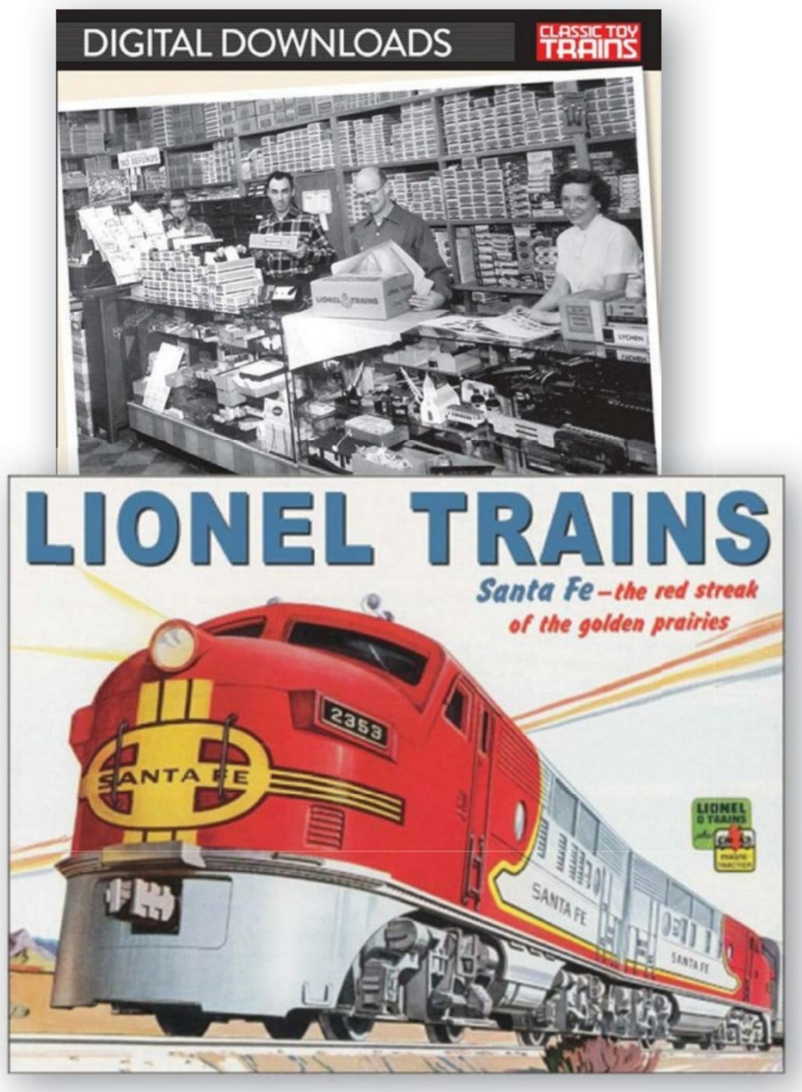


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Lionel No. 9186 porthole caboose
Released in 1977, Lionel's No. 9186 Conrail N5c porthole caboose captured an important moment in America's railroad history. Learn more about the history behind this notable modern-era product from Senior Editor Roger Carp.



Notable products from Amherst
Contributing Editor Stan Trzoniec shares several new and interesting products that he discovered while attending the 2026 Railroad Hobby Show in Amherst, Mass. earlier this year. You'll see a variety of items from Lionel, MTH, Atlas, and more.



History of toy train lithography
Learn how Ives, American Flyer, Lionel, Dorfan, and other toy train manufacturers decorated their products in the early 20th century from longtime CTT author Peter H. Riddle. Don't miss the colorful and interesting photos that accompany this comprehensive article!

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Lionel tubular O-22 switch fix

Over time, Lionel's O-22 switches for tubular track often develop a broken solder joint. This problem renders the non-derailing feature on the postwar O gauge switches unreliable at best or non-functional at worst.

There are many reasons why intermittent operation of the broken solder joint can cause problems. Specifically, when an operator uses a main line and two sidings to allow multitrain operation. This ensures that as the train exits the departure siding, it immediately resets the distant entrance switch to guide it back to the correct siding.

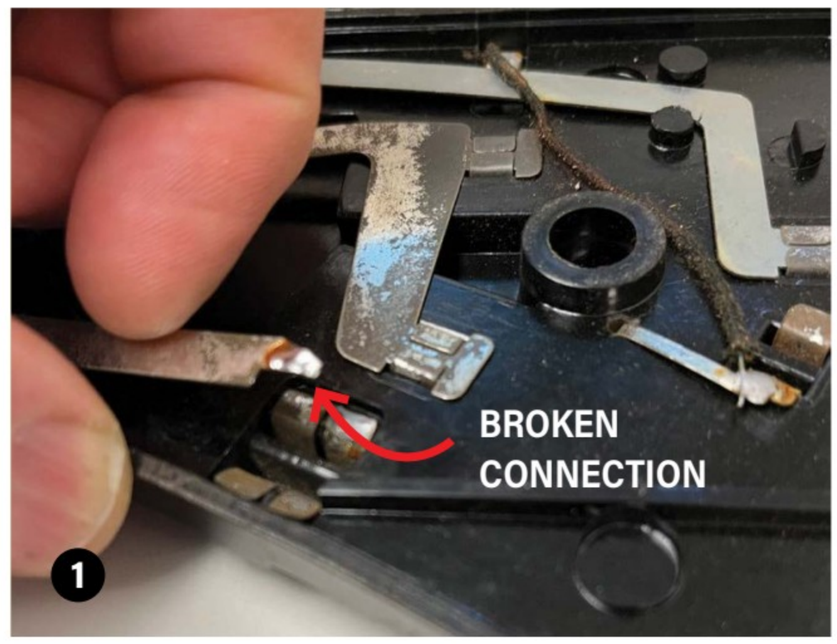
Fortunately, It's easy to use the non-derailing feature of the O-22 switch to trip (align) the opposite switch without complex logic.

I took a photograph that highlighted the problem (**Step 1**) and showed the simple soldered wire that is the solution (**Step 2**). I resoldered the broken tab and added an extra wire to ensure that the electrical connection remains active should the original tab break due to the vibration associated with use.

Since figuring out this easy solution, I've taken every O-22 switch I own and fixed or modified it as shown in the second picture. — *Jim Bielanski*

TWO IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- Solder the wire onto the insulated rail only.
- Place a piece of electrical tape over the repair to ensure it does not contact the metal backing plate when reassembled.

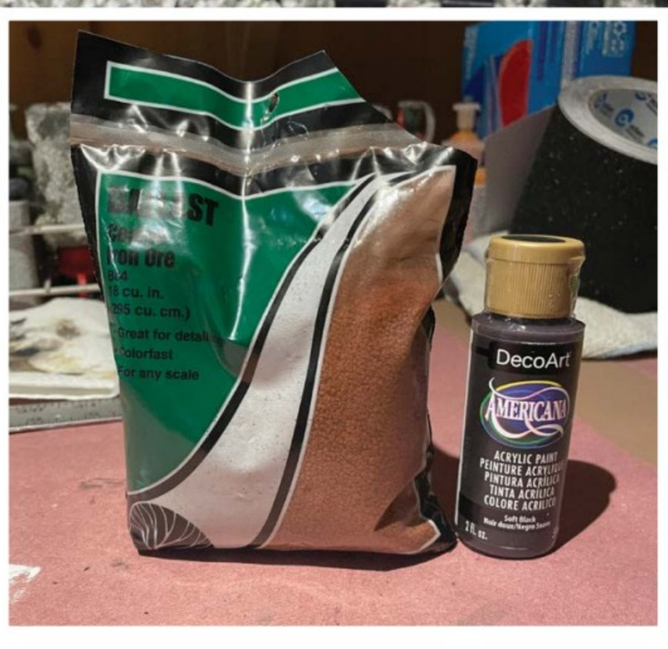




Easy ore car upgrade

In the Fall 2025 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*, you reviewed an RMT O gauge ore car. I've found that Woodland Scenics No. B84 Coarse Iron Ore Ballast greatly improves the ore load's appearance. Simply remove the plastic ore load, spray it generously with adhesive, and sprinkle on the ballast. Diluted DecoArt Americana No. DA155 Soft Black acrylic paint, brushed on and immediately wiped off, removes the plastic appearance of the rest of the ore car while adding instant weathering. – *Joseph Holtzinger*







ORIGINAL ORE CAR

Photo by Cody Grivno

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