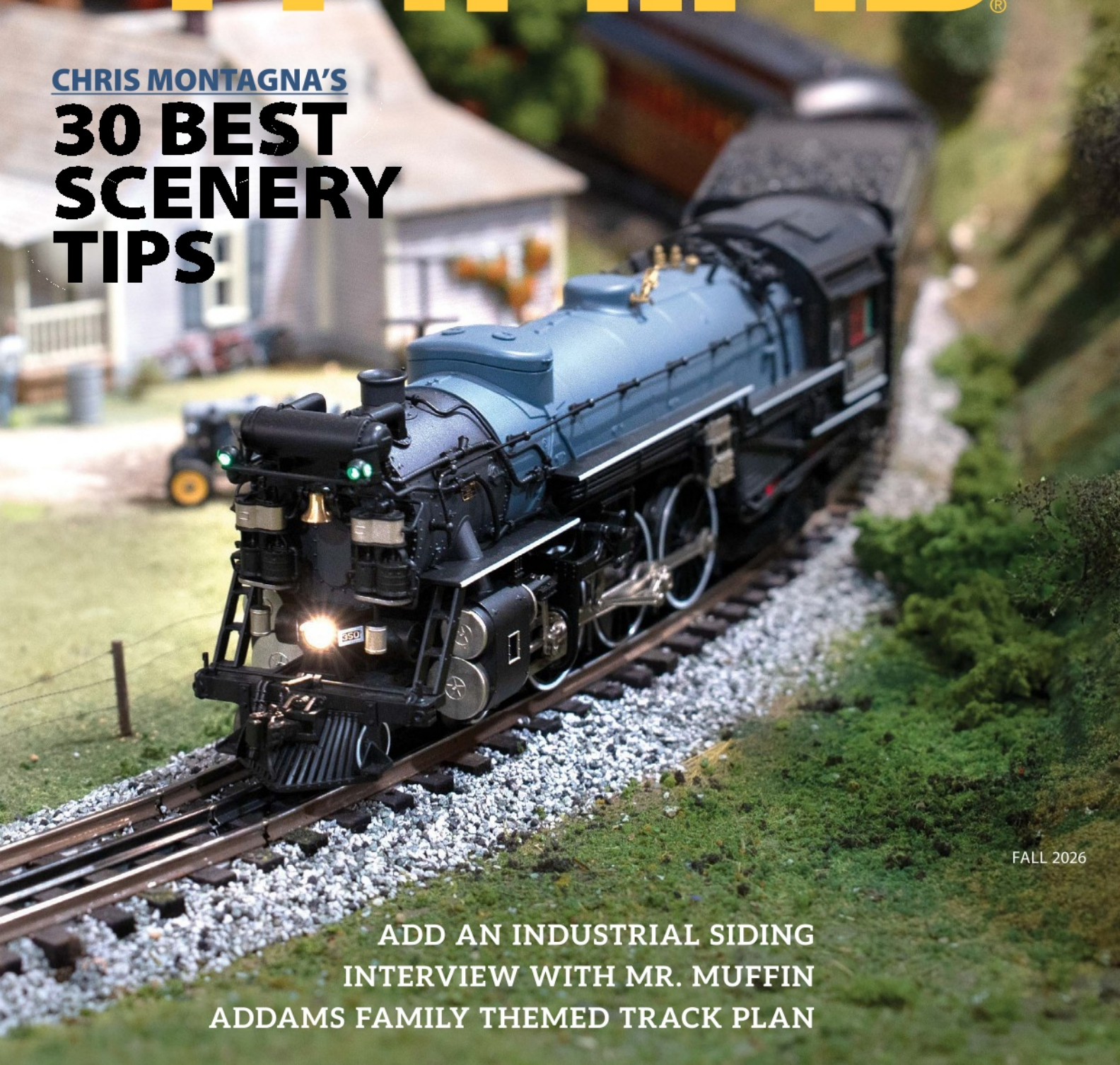


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The "true" value of toy trains

A couple of months ago, I was waiting in the checkout line at a local hobby shop. I said hello to the gentleman ahead of me, and we had a short conversation. He told me he was educating his children about the value of his toy trains. His comment stuck with me.

What kind of value was he referring to? Perhaps he owns rare items that are worth a lot of money and doesn't want his relatives tossing them in the trash someday.

Maybe "educating" means learning the stories behind the models. His boyhood (or newer) trains have value because of treasured memories, and he hopes to pass them along for future generations to enjoy.

Or does he want to educate them

about the toy train hobby and explain how much enjoyment it's given him during his lifetime?

Regardless of how this man – or any of you – perceive the value of toy trains, it should be clear that you can't put a price on what you learn from a hobby, the happiness it brings when life gets you down, or the friends you gain along the way.

I'll never know exactly what this gentleman meant by his comment, but it's sure given me food for thought. Perhaps it will also make you consider what your locomotives and rolling stock are "worth" to you.

Rene Schweitzer, Editor

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



Contributing Editor Bob Keller gave me this amusing K-Line car many years ago. It makes me smile whenever I look at it, which is why I don't care whether it has much monetary value. The memories associated with this piece of O gauge rolling stock are worth more than its cash value. Cody Grivno photo

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Lionel at the World's Fair

As a Yale University graduate, I must comment on the cover of the November 1907 *Everbest Magazine* in the article "Lionel Trains: Meet me at the fair," by Robert J. Osterhoff in the Spring issue. Pictured is undoubtedly a Yale football player, and Yale won the national championship that year. In those years, American football was in its infancy. There were a handful of East Coast colleges playing the "new" sport. Besides the toy train article highlighted by Mr. Osterhoff, I'm sure there was an article about Yale winning the championship.

I lived on the campus in New Haven from 1962 to 1966. As a later American Flyer collector, I often think how I missed a golden opportunity to walk across the Yale campus and see the factory manufacturing trains. — *Elliott A. Yolles*



The November 1907 issue of *Everbest Magazine* doesn't contain any football content.

RESPONSE FROM BOB OSTERHOFF:

Your observation that a Yale football player is pictured on the cover of the *Everbest Magazine* is correct. Perhaps it is because the President of Ewing-Merkle Electric Co., Nathaniel Ewing, was a graduate of Yale University! However, there is no mention of Yale or its football success in that issue.

Your comments about American Flyer trains in 1966 was most interesting. Many items from the A.C. Gilbert factory fell into collector hands during that period, most likely from the dumpsters at the factory in New Haven. Ironically, the train inventory was acquired by Lionel in New Jersey for liquidation. That story I tell in my book, *Inside the Lionel Trains Fun Factory* (Project Roar Publishing).



The Foley Railroad Museum features a 20 x 60-foot layout operated by volunteers.

LOVE THOSE GREATEST FINDS

I wanted to communicate the appreciation and excitement I felt while reading Howard Johnson's article in the Summer 2026 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*. When he got to the end and recalled how the store manager was describing how itds had acquired the Lionel set from an elderly gentleman, there was such pathos described by the shop owner. Now, in his later or last years, he was passing along his trains, a vestige of that dream, in the hopes that someone else would enjoy them. Great, great, great story. — *Stuart Mitnick*

MORE STRUCTURE INFORMATION

I enjoyed your story in the Summer Issue, "A buyer's guide to structures." I have purchased structures from many of the manufacturers mentioned. There are two manufacturers not on your list that produce great O scale wood laser kits (along with other scales) that I have built and have displayed on my layout. They are ITLA Scale Models (itlascascalemodels.com) in Canada and Right On Track Models (rightontrackmodels.com) in North Port, Fla. These two companies produce high-quality structures that will add variety to any model railroad. — *Edwin Berry*

TOY TRAINS AT FOLEY

I became a subscriber to *Classic Toy Trains* beginning with issue No. 1 back in 1987! At age 93 I'm downsizing but am still into trains, volunteering at the Foley Railroad Museum in Alabama, where we operate O gauge trains on a 20 x 60-foot layout and entertain about 20,000 visitors each year. CTT published a great article about our museum back in the September 2019 issue.

Foley was named Alabama's WWII Heritage City, so we look forward to more

visitors to see our trains as well as the displays of how Foley contributed to the country during that war. This photo of the layout shows scale reproductions of 1950s-era buildings that still exist in downtown Foley. — *George Nelson*

BALANCE OF MAGAZINE CONTENT

I read Rene's "Editor's Note" in the Spring 2026 issue. Her posturing the future of the magazine by anchoring it from the 1987 first issue couldn't be more spot on. The concept of "balance" has always been all inclusive in this wonderful hobby. Roger Carp is simply marvelous in his articles and uses diversity to cover all aspects in this hobby. This issue is proof of concept.

Rene, you have taken over from some good editors and have been doing a superlative job. The word "classic" means different things, but covering both past and current production shouldn't be a limiting view, as some readers have noted. CTT has always been the premier magazine in the hobby, and I can say, stay the course! You both are providing excellent content.

— *David Karol*



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39154	PRR Congressional 15' Alum. 2-Cars	195.00
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▲ Paul Cutrupi's O gauge layout

The gloriously decorated O gauge trains from the pre-World War II period of production have become the focus on Paul Cutrupi's 10 x 10-foot home layout. You never know which original and reproduction models he'll be operating amid the vintage accessories and structures on his display. A favorite of this resident of Bordentown, N.J., is the Williams re-make of the Ives No. 1694 locomotive, shown pulling matching passenger cars. The Lionel Nos. 300 Hell Gate Bridge and 442 Diner are about 90 years old.

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. Oh yes, always put a train in your photo!

Digital photographs must be taken with a 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.



▲ Dale Long's O gauge layout

Only on a toy train layout can fans of the modern Norfolk Southern and its notable predecessors, especially the Norfolk & Western Ry., watch some of their greatest locomotives in action together. Dale Long appreciates the opportunities open to him as an O gauge operator, which is the reason he routinely runs the fantastic Lionel No. 82342 N&W Legacy 2-8-8-2 steam locomotive on the main level of his layout in Rossville, Ind., with the powerful MTH No. 20-22083-1 NS GP35 road diesel on the upper line. Dale, who launched work on this realistic three-rail display, credits his wife, Lois, and family members Jesse and Suzanne Longenecker for their support; he's grateful that his granddaughter Autumn Kuns snapped this photo highlighting the excellent rockwork on the layout.



◀ Chuck Countryman's O gauge layout

Marx enthusiast Chuck Countryman has built his 3 x 8-foot three-rail display in an updated part of a farmhouse built more than a century ago in Clinton, Wis. He cherishes the No. 666 locomotive and tender braking to a halt by the Marx Girard station in the town of Countryville. Why is this postwar 2-4-2 steamer so important to Chuck? Because it was a gift from his beloved grandfather more than 50 years ago, and the 666 has inspired him to acquire more of the colorful accessories by Louis Marx & Co.



▲ Donnie Belles' O gauge layout

This seems to be the issue of *Classic Toy Trains* with O gauge layouts constructed in rural structures. Besides Chuck Countryman's Marx display in a farmhouse, we have Donnie Belles' terrific 150-square-foot display on the second floor of a barn originally erected by Amish farmers in Shickshinny, Pa. Reflecting Donnie's lifelong passion for Lionel trains, the layout features many postwar and modern locomotives and accessories. Eli Scott photographed a classic No. 2056 4-6-4 small Hudson steamer and tender delivering automobiles to a local dealer in the fictitious village of Little Shickshinny that's filled with Plasticville structures.



▲ Lew Strauss' O gauge layout

When you think of Las Vegas, Nev., where O gauge modeler Lew Strauss makes his home, you tend to conjure up blazing temperatures with thermometers hitting triple digits. Maybe the wish to cool off explains why Lew photographed on his home layout a Lionel No. 38428 Budd Rail Diesel Car that's lettered for the Alaska RR! He caught the handsome model most recently cataloged in 2011 as it picked up passengers milling around a quiet station. We plan to present more of Lew's 12 x 21-foot layout in a future issue of *Classic Toy Trains*.



◀ Paul Bell's S gauge layout

There might not have been a lot of square footage available to dedicated modeler Paul Bell for a layout at his home in Tarzana, Calif., but that certainly didn't limit his imagination. He reported that the 8½ x 8½-foot display boasts a whopping 15 independent loops of track over which 12 trains can run simultaneously. They range from N scale all the way up to O gauge. Near to Paul's heart are the American Flyer S gauge trains dominating one of the elevated lines. Commanding attention in the picture he took is a No. 405 Silver Streak Alco PA diesel unit. "I've been enjoying model trains my entire life," Paul writes, "and have bounced from scale to scale, but I always kept everything. I now realize that *all of them* are fun."



▲ James Johnson's O gauge layout

Skilled model railroaders typically follow the path taken by James Johnson when planning and constructing his O gauge layout. Meaning, they move at a slow yet steady pace, striving to enjoy every phase of work. Jim, who resides in Columbus, Ohio, reports that making scenery and adding structures are among his favorite stages of construction, and the superb results on his 8 x 12-foot three-rail display attest to the wisdom of his approach. Moving across a grade crossing on this day in September is a Lionel No. 84251 LionChief Plus 2-8-4 Berkshire steamer lettered for the Santa Fe.

NEWS BITS



■ New Atlas O catalog

Atlas O released a Spring 2026 catalog on its website. The 68-page catalog features new paint schemes for several locomotives and rolling stock and one new three-rail model.

A ES44 diesel in the Premier line will be available in BNSF (25th anniversary), Canadian National (ex Citi Rail, United States semiquincentennial), CSX (Louisville & Nashville heritage, NC&StL heritage, Seaboard System heritage), and Norfolk Southern (No. 30138911 shown above). Expected delivery: First quarter of 2027. Price: \$699.95

A P42 diesel in the Premier line will come in Amtrak (Phases II and IV), Salute to Veterans, Metro North (MTA Central, Standard, Penn Central, and New Haven). Expected delivery: First quarter of 2027. Price: \$649.95/\$709.95, depending on model.

A 44-tonner locomotive will be available in Arcade & Attica, Black River & Western, Detroit Edison, Lehigh Valley, Pullman Standard, Southern Pacific (Halloween), and Pacific Fruit Express. Expected delivery: First quarter of 2027. Price: \$499.95

A Trinity 64-foot refrigerator car was announced as part of the Master line. It will be available in BNSF, CIT Group, TILX, Tropicana, and Union Pacific. Expected delivery: First quarter of 2027. Price: \$119.95.

To view the catalog, visit shop.atlasrr.com

■ Trainz acquires DHS Diecast

Trainz.com has purchased DHS Diecast. Trainz announced the acquisition on April 10 in an email to *Classic Toy Trains*. The acquisition includes DHS's inventory and website. DHS Diecast products include construction, military, and truck models in 1:48, 1:64, and other scales. Visit trainz.com to learn more.

■ In memoriam: Walter W. "Bud" Reece Sr.

Bachmann Trains announced the passing of Walter W. "Bud" Reece Sr. on June 24, 2026. Bud joined Bachmann in 1993, according to a Facebook post from Bachmann. He eventually became Senior Vice President of Sales & Marketing, a position he held until his retirement in 2015.

Bud was inducted to the Hobby Manufacturers Association (HMA) Hall of Fame in 2008. The HMA also awarded Bud a Bobbye Hall Distinguished Service Award in 2012, recognizing his dedication and service to the hobby.

We at CTT offer the Reece family our deepest condolences.

■ In memoriam: Richard "Dick" Maddox

Richard "Dick" Maddox, who spent much of his life in the model train industry, died on July 9, 2026. He began his long career with E&H Hobbies in Philadelphia and joined Bachmann Trains in 1987 as Senior Vice President of Sales & Marketing and held that position until 1999, according to a Facebook post from Bachmann.

Dick worked at Lionel LLC as Chief Operating Officer from 2000 until 2001, when he announced his retirement. Then in July 2003, according to a news story in the October 2003 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*, he joined Atlas as Chief Executive Officer, a title he held until 2005.

In recognition of his many contributions to the hobby, Dick was inducted into the Model

Railroad Industry Hall of Fame in 2008.

The editorial staff at *Classic Toy Trains* remembers Dick fondly and appreciates the assistance he provided us with news releases and other information during his career at Bachmann, Lionel, and Atlas. We extend our condolences to Dick's family.

■ Chicagoland Lionel Railroad Club featured on WGN-TV

The Chicagoland Lionel Railroad Club was recently featured on WGN-TV's Morning Show. In an email to *Classic Toy Trains*, President Herbert W. Koch shared the story and photos of the live June 25 television event.



"This exciting opportunity began when member Terry Nolin contacted WGN-TV and invited them to our club. Producer Natalie Skryd accepted the invitation. During the weeks leading up to the visit, I met with members to discuss ways the club might be featured best during the broadcast," said Koch.

The Morning Show, Koch noted, "opened from the mezzanine level, overlooking the layout. Viewers were treated to the beautiful scenery, impressive backdrops, trains in operation, and most importantly, the enthusiasm and support of our members. It was a wonderful way to introduce the club."

Classic Toy Trains showcased the club's layout in its special-interest publication, *Great Toy Train Layouts You Can Visit*, in 2025.

To learn more about the club and watch a video about the event, visit its website at clcrtrains.com



Map it out: Patrick's Trains, 142 29th St., Wheeling, WV, 26003, is selling a custom run MTH 4-Bay Cylindrical Hopper as part of the RailKing line. The hopper features Union Pacific map graphics and requires O-31 curves for operation (No. 30-75803). Expected delivery in October 2026. **Price: \$89.99. Website: patstrains.com**



Loud and proud: Lionel Trains, 6301 Performance Dr., Concord, NC 28027, is selling a Screaming Eagle Sound Boxcar (No. 2628490). The operating boxcar features patriotic graphics, sound, and music, and it requires O-27 curves for operation. **Price: \$129.99. Website: lionel.com**



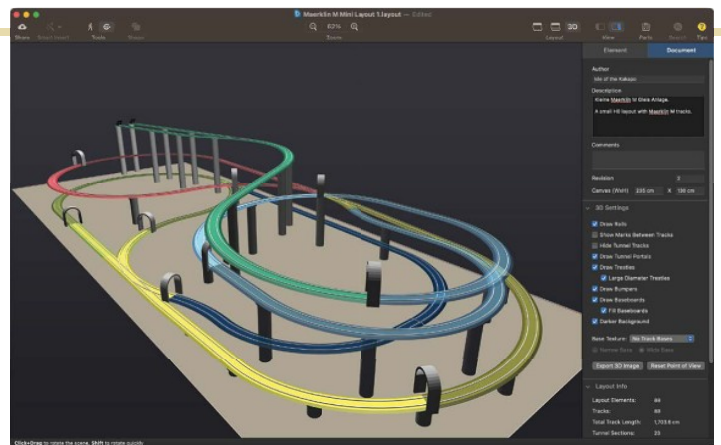
Heavy hauler: MTH Electric Trains, 7393 Washington Blvd. Ste. 101, Elkridge, MD 21075, has an ES44AC Diesel Locomotive as part of the Premier line. The O gauge locomotive features Proto-Sound 3.0, onboard DCC/DCS decoder, detachable snowplow, O-42 operation, and much more (No. 20-22189 shown). Expected delivery in December 2026. **Price: \$699.95. Website: mthtrains.com**



Lady Liberty: Lionel Trains, 6301 Performance Dr., Concord, NC 28027, has added to its cataloged line a Statue of Liberty Illuminated Boxcar (No. 2628500). The O gauge model features patriotic graphics and LED lighting on both boxcar sides, and it requires O-27 curves for operation. **Price: \$159.99. Website: lionel.com**



Queen of steam: 3rd Rail Division of Sunset Models, 16 Beta Court, San Ramon, CA 94583, has introduced an O scale Norfolk & Western J class steam locomotive. The brass hybrid model is available with either Soundtraxx Blunami or Electric Railroad (ERR) Cruise Commander. ERR Cruise is compatible with conventional, MTH DCS, and Lionel Legacy/TMCC systems. Blunami is operated using a smartphone app only. **Price: \$1,999.99. Website: thirdandtownsendmodels.com**

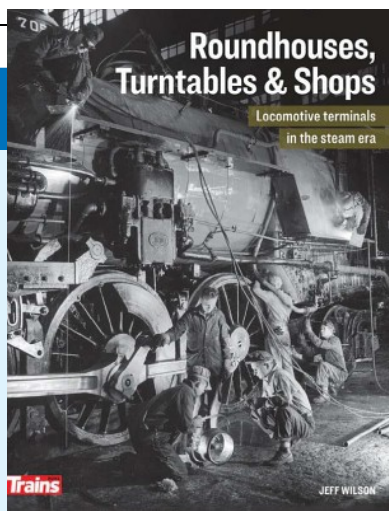


Make a (track) plan: RailModeller Pro has announced version 6.7 of its track-planning software. The new version includes a custom print area. Libraries for most model-railroading scales are included. The software requires Apple iOS to operate and is available for purchase in the Apple App Store. **Price: \$44.99. Website: railmodeller.com**

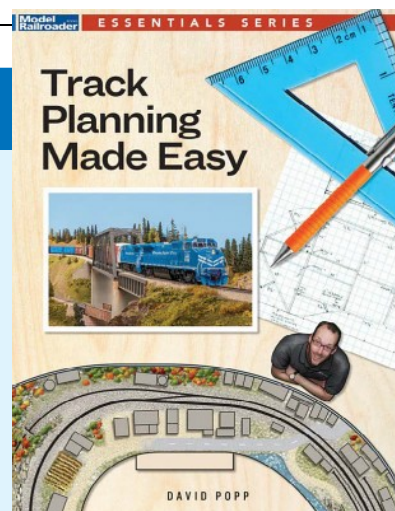
Shop.Trains.com

HANDY SANDER:

Excel Blades' Sanding Stick and Belt is sure to become one of your new favorite tools. The sanding stick features a spring-tensioned mechanism that keeps the belt in place. The aluminum oxide sanding belts provide durability and consistent sanding performance. The belts are available in a variety of grits. **Price: \$12.50 for one stick and two belts.**



SHOP TALK: Jeff Wilson's latest book, *Roundhouses, Turntables, and Shops*, gives you a guided tour through the steam-era locomotive terminal: the roundhouse, turntable, coaling tower, water station, and shop. This 208-page softcover book includes period photographs and detailed text, showing how the workers at these facilities kept the locomotives rolling. **Price: \$29.99.**



PLANNING GUIDE: In *Track Planning Made Easy*, author David Popp teaches you how to design your own layout from the ground up. Topics include identifying a usable space in your home, choosing a theme, calculating grades, and working around obstacles like doors and windows. David's techniques are applicable to model railroads of any scale. **Price: \$27.99**



Big & beautiful: Lionel has announced a VisionLine Big Boy No. 4014 in several patriotic paint schemes (No. 2731090 shown). The engine features a depleting coal load, whistle steam, O-72 operation, and much more. **Price: \$2,899.99 for model shown; price varies based on model.** Website: lionel.com



Gritty details: Brennan's Model Railroading is selling a variety of scenery products. Rock Creek Sand is a fine-textured, medium-colored sand meant for scenery or ground cover. Kaw Valley Sand is a fine-grain sand meant to replicate sand used in engines or in yards/near sand houses. Superior Sand is available in three textures (Fine, Coarse, Pebbles) and is useful near factories, warehouses, and streets. Each 24-ounce bag costs **\$9.95**. Website: brennansmodelrr.com



Fix 'em up: Millhouse River Studio, 2541 River Rd., Niagara Falls, NY 14304-3739, has an O scale Engine Service Building kit. The laser-cut wood kits include details and a base, and are available in 3-, 5-, and 7-stall versions. Optional LED lighting kits are sold separately. **Price: 3-stall, \$650; 5-stall, \$900; 7-stall, \$1,200.** To order, call 716-830-5267. Website: millhouseriverstudio.com



American Flyer No. 637 boxcar

OVERLOOKED S GAUGE PIONEER

During the past 25 years, when I've been writing Collectible Classics, I have tried not to follow one type of model with the same kind, even if their manufacturers or periods of production differed. But here I'll be breaking this informal rule, and I hope you won't mind.

WHO WAS FIRST?

In the Summer 2026 issue, I focused on the Marx No. 1950 GAEX boxcar. That O gauge model shed light on the direction Louis Marx & Co. wanted to take its train line a few years into the postwar era.

The GAEX car was a forerunner of the No. 6464 near-scale boxcars introduced by Lionel in 1953, models known to every collector. Were there other predecessors? Had other toy train manufacturers somehow beaten Lionel to the punch?

Truth be told, an upstart competitor had crossed the finish line ahead of Lionel. I'm referring to American Model Toys, the Indiana firm that had released a group of near-scale O gauge boxcars with realistic decoration just one year earlier in 1952.

But further research suggested that Marx had hit the jackpot first with its GAEX boxcar, at least in terms of reflecting the latest developments on North American railroads in the years after World War II. Was the question of who had won the boxcar sweepstakes

answered? Could I move forward to a very different model for Collectible Classics?

Not exactly. Experience has taught me never to ignore the American Flyer line of S gauge trains and accessories put out by the A.C. Gilbert Co. This is why the No. 637 Missouri-Kansas-Texas boxcar introduced in 1949 is in the spotlight now.

SLOW START

The Gilbert Co. had modified its train line for 1946 by abandoning three-rail O gauge in favor of two-rail S gauge. Now it would be able to challenge Lionel with truly scale locomotives and rolling stock that were smaller and yet more realistic.

The new American Flyer roster had to include a model of the ubiquitous boxcar. The No. 633 model served that purpose. Between 1946 and '48, Gilbert made an array of versions, some with unpainted red plastic body shells and others with entirely or partially painted shells (red, Tuscan Red, and white). All 14 variations listed in the first volume of *Greenberg's Guide to American Flyer S Gauge* (published in 1997) came lettered for the Baltimore & Ohio RR.

And that decoration was about as plain and uninteresting as possible! Nothing but the name of the railroad at the top of the right side of the boxcar and a tiny B&O herald on the left. The cars, equipped with

link couplers, looked more like toys than scale models, especially at a time when some full-size railroads were painting boxcars in bright colors and plastering slogans and emblems across the long wide sides of their boxcars. Gilbert seemed lost.

BRILLIANT IN YELLOW

Then came the revelation — the release in 1949 of a new boxcar in bold yellow with unique graphics. The 637 featured the markings of the Missouri-Kansas-Texas, a railroad associated with the middle portion of the U.S. rather than the eastern region toy train manufacturers typically showcased. Besides the large "MKT" lettering on the left side, it announced on the right, "The Katy serves the Southwest."

The 637, known with an unpainted yellow plastic shell or a painted one, captured the look of an exciting and attractive piece of rolling stock from the postwar era. However, the Gilbert Co. offered the MKT boxcar only as a separate-sale item in 1949 (priced at \$3 east of Denver and \$3.15 farther west).

Not one American Flyer set included a 637 in 1949, even though the S gauge car was breaking barriers for toy trains and possibly inspiring designers and sales executives at other firms. Only now can we recognize the brilliant yellow MKT boxcar as the classic it really was. **CTT**



SCENES AND DETAILS **TELL A STORY**

CHRIS MONTAGNA SHARES HIS LAYOUT AND 30 GREAT SCENERY TIPS

STORY BY CHRIS MONTAGNA // PHOTOS BY CALEB EASTER



An upper-level loop on Chris Montagna's O gauge layout allows trains to travel around a farm and small industry siding.

- 1.** Mountain made from Sculptamold covered with acrylic paint and ground cover
- 2.** Variety of tree types to avoid repetition
- 3.** Vary colors of green ground cover
- 4.** Vary dirt/gravel/ground color for more interest
- 5.** Blend scenery into the backdrop
- 6.** Broken sight lines make layout appear larger

I create my own world as a model railroader. Building an O gauge layout (the third of my life and the second as an adult), which entails everything from mountains to structures, is where I find moments of Zen.

My track plan wasn't modeled after anything prototypical; the focus was to maximize long runs and viewing/filming areas. The design consists of a double main line as a folded dog-bone, with an incline to an upper-level loop and a grade to

a lower-level reversing loop and storage yard. The 26 x 36-foot layout follows two walls in my basement and has a maximum width of 11 feet.

TOURING THE LAYOUT

My home layout begins at the five-stall roundhouse from Altoona Model Works with a 28-inch turntable from Millhouse River Studio (see p. 21). This area has concrete platforms, black ballast, and refuse tossed near the buildings.

Moving from south to

north, beyond the yard limits, an out-of-its-heyday town emerges. There's a rundown bar and one-pump gas station. Continuing down Main Street you see another tavern not far from an abandoned building that suffered a fire. A single traffic intersection leads to old company homes and an overgrown playground.

Out of town, the elevation drops down a slope to an abandoned car, old factory siding, and hobo camp along a lake. The lake sits at the base of a

mountain characterized by exposed rock, ground cover, and trees. Continuing around the fold in the dog-bone you reach a newer downtown. Paved streets, traffic lights, and a row of Woodland Scenics buildings and vehicles reflect a thriving community. Open businesses, newsstands, and people on the sidewalks contrast with the dilapidation across the lake.

A track passes behind the Main Street buildings and leads into a tunnel portal. This



Looking south on the layout reveals a station siding with Atlas Hi-Cube boxcars, a double mainline, and a Lionel Pennsylvania RR 4-8-2 Mountain steam locomotive resting on the yard lead.

1. Building foundations have been made from 1/8-inch hardboard spray-painted with camouflage khaki.
2. Sidewalks cut from hardboard or Masonite and scored with a hobby knife before being spray-painted with camouflage khaki
3. Woodland Scenics Just Plug lighting system throughout city scenes
4. Figures suggest activity. Groups of odd numbers work best.

DETAILS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

As a modeler who also shares video, I aim to provide enough details so the scene seemed real. To do so, I need each scene to tell a story.

For example, my rundown town has a handful of businesses doing their best to stay open as residents up the hill struggle to maintain their properties. Overgrowth at the playground forces kids to seek joy outside of town at the lake, where a fish and wildlife officer questions their fishing permits. A family homestead begins to sell off land for trailers due to slowing crop sales and a failed machine shop business. An abandoned siding with a rusted-out boxcar (a Lionel HoboSounds model) offers shelter for a group of vagabonds.

Breaking up sight lines creates the illusion that trains are longer than they are and travel farther. Buildings and details in the foreground provide broken views as trains pass by, mirroring the world around us.





Lionel Union Pacific Heritage Fleet E9s (custom run from Mr. Muffin's Trains) sit on a yard siding. A weathered PRR E6 4-4-0 Atlantic is dwarfed by the Golden Gate Depot coaling tower.

- 1.** Weathered structures show age and heavy use
- 2.** Building flats suggest depth while conserving space
- 3.** Dark ground cover suggests dirt or heavy use

Spring is definitely in the air as patrons visit their favorite stores and restaurants. A coal train appears out of the mountain behind Main Street.

- 1.** Eye-catching details, such as signs, picnic tables, and a newspaper vending box, tell the story of an active business.
- 2.** Woodland Scenics traffic lights add life and illumination.



line enters the mountain and descends below the table to a reversing loop and two storage tracks. The town continues in the background as an inclined street crosses the upper-level line to another road bordered by large building flats.

The double main line enters two tunnel portals. The inner line begins its journey through a long tunnel and back toward the engine facility. The outer loop splits in front of the town and crosses a 48-inch-long bridge before ascending and entering its own single portal into the mountainside.

Trains continue through the impressive mountain under the upper-level loop on 40 feet of

track before exiting behind the hobo camp and continuing behind the defunct town scene.

The upper-level loop ascends along the back walls and travels in front of the upper spine Main Street with building flats. Then it goes through two switches, one beginning a reversing loop and the second completing a small loop for a train to navigate around a farm scene at the base of a mountain adjacent to a failed machining business.

At the center of the loop along a dirt road is a cabinet factory with siding, and a trailer park. Up the mountainside is a pathway to a campsite.

CTT

ADDING SCENERY AND ELEVATION

Scenery should have a level of continuity. Are you modeling Appalachia, the Great Plains, or the Southwest? Is this an urban, suburban, or rural area? You aren't restricted to one type of scenery on a model railroad, though. Depending on your layout's size and theme, you can blend elements from a suburban area to lead to a rural scene.

I've weathered the buildings, houses, and automobiles on

my layout to highlight their age and provide variation. A mix of Scenic Express SuperTrees and other commercially made trees provides a realistic look.

I built streets and sidewalks using 1/8-inch-thick Masonite, cutting expansion joints with a hobby knife, and spraying it with several coats of camouflage khaki paint.

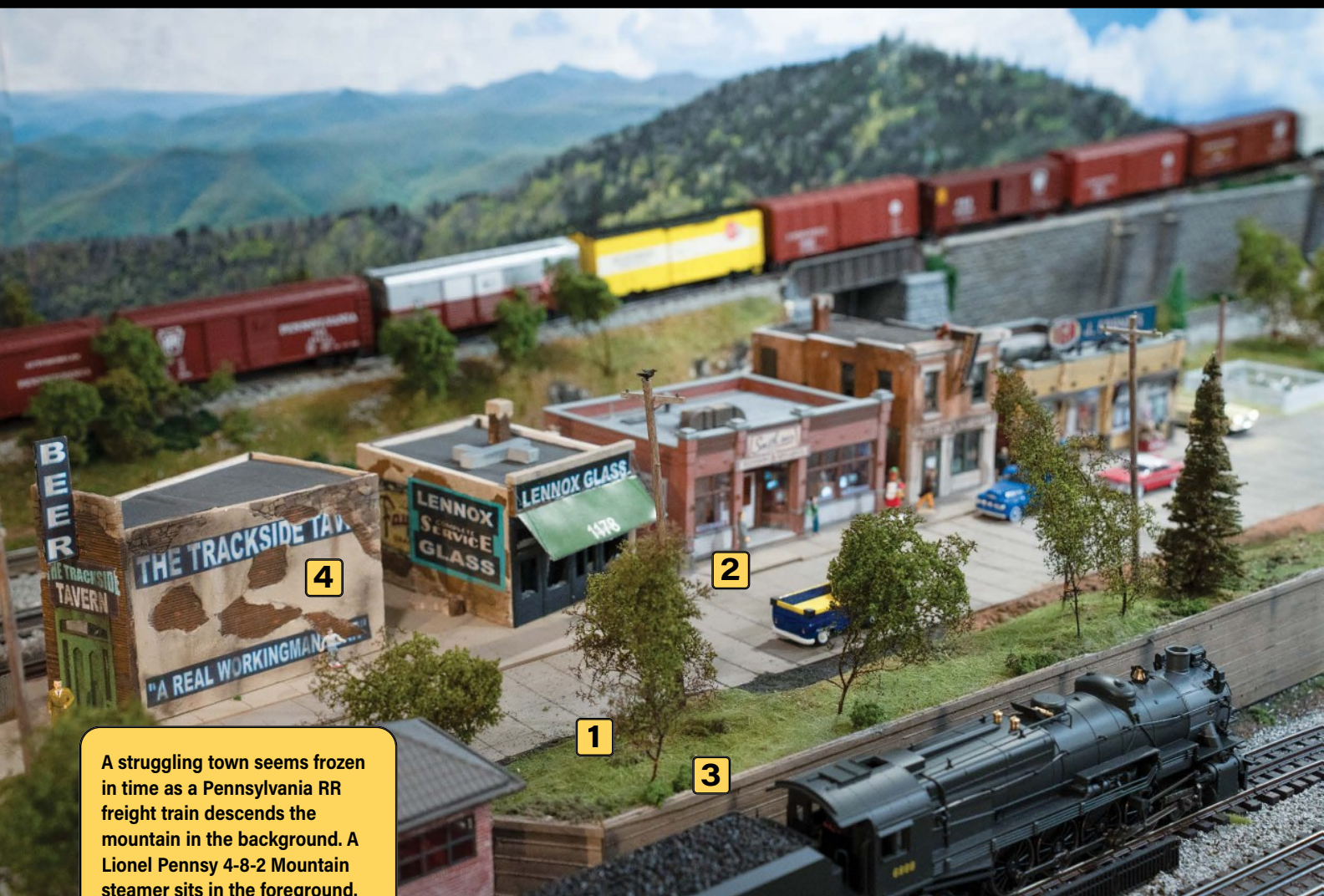
Ground foam on plywood can create a landscape of flat

terrain, but it's not realistic. My table is plywood with Homasote. To change the elevation by 1/2 inch, I placed Homasote in strategic areas under the track. I blended the Homasote with Sculptamold and a coating of brown latex paint that suggests dirt, over which I can sprinkle ground cover.

In my past-its-prime town (see photo below), I used plenty of earth tones, blending the

ground with the buildings to suggest that the various structures are being overtaken by nature. Patches of long static grass in particular show unkempt and overgrown areas in the area.

The town sits on a section of 2-inch-thick pink foam board to serve as another method of changing elevation. The elevation provides variety for the viewer while hiding trains that are traveling west.

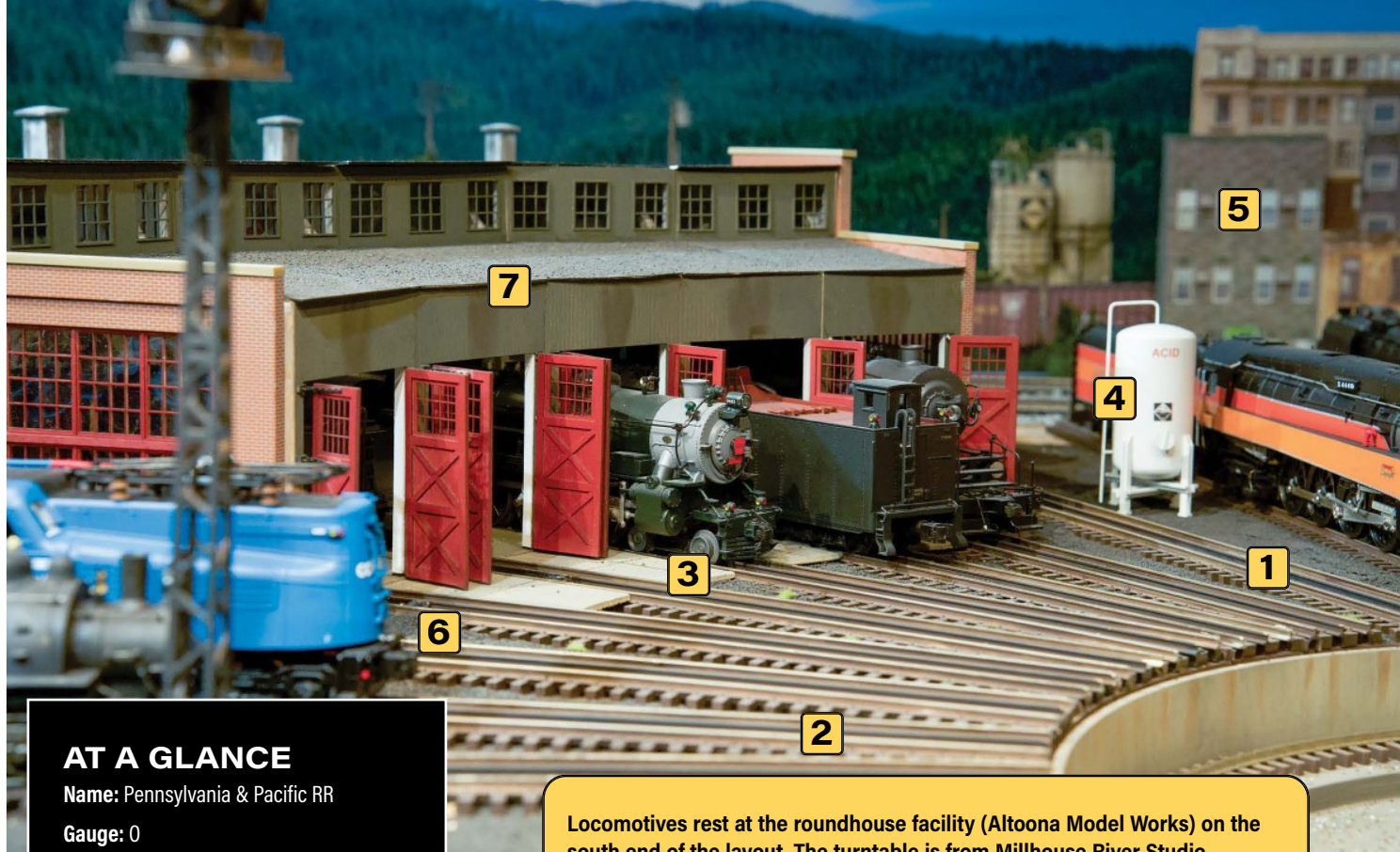


A struggling town seems frozen in time as a Pennsylvania RR freight train descends the mountain in the background. A Lionel Pennsy 4-8-2 Mountain steamer sits in the foreground.

1. Long static grass suggests unkempt look
2. Fewer figures reflects less local activity
3. Add weeds or overgrowth
4. Weather buildings to suggest age or neglect

MORE FROM CHRIS MONTAGNA

A change of scene, Sept./Oct. 2022
Building a farmhouse scene, July/August 2023
Build a diorama, Sept./Oct. 2024
Add a boxcar scene, June/July 2024
Add a temporary holiday layout, Summer 2025



AT A GLANCE

Name: Pennsylvania & Pacific RR

Gauge: 0

Dimensions: 26 feet x 36 feet

Track and switches: GarGraves, Ross Custom Switches

Motive power: Atlas 0, Lionel, MTH

Rolling stock: Atlas 0, K-Line, Lionel, MTH

Controls: Lionel Legacy and MTH Digital Command System

Structures: Altoona Model Works, Downtown Deco, Golden Gate Depot, Menards, Plasticville U.S.A., Todd Architectural Models, TW TrainWorx, Woodland Scenics

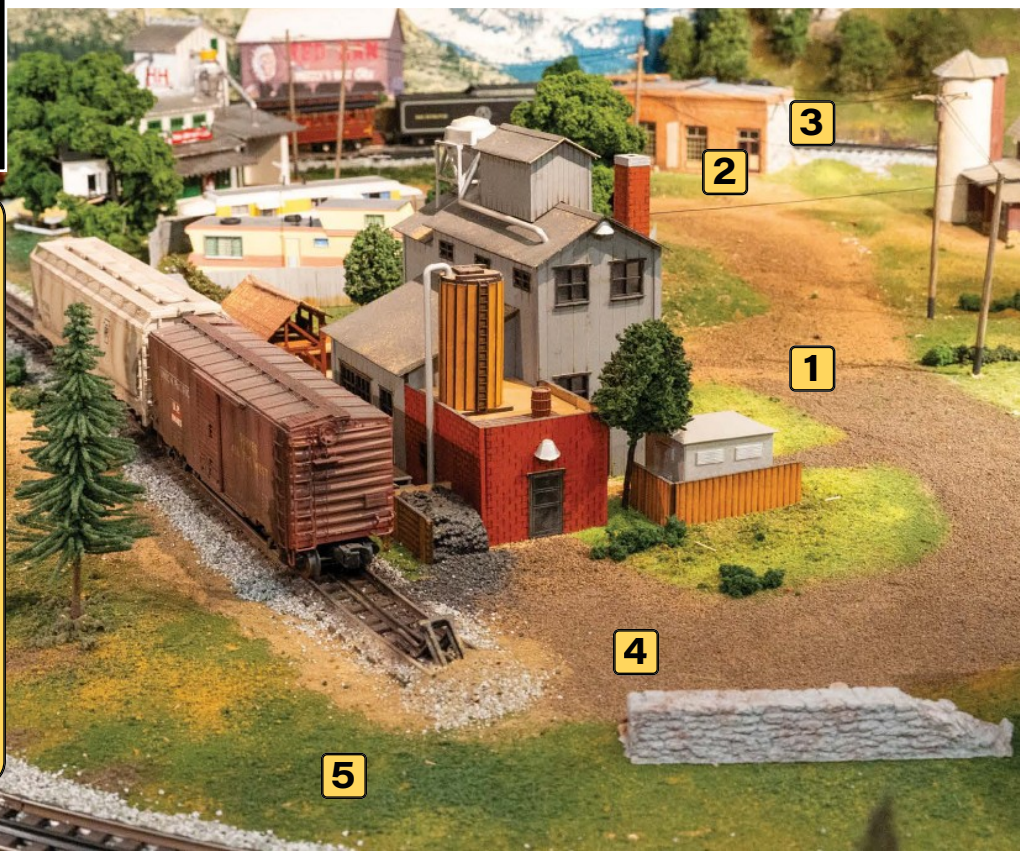
Figures: Artista, Woodland Scenics

Locomotives rest at the roundhouse facility (Altoona Model Works) on the south end of the layout. The turntable is from Millhouse River Studio.

1. Black ballast suggests dirt, oil, and grime from engine use
2. Paint and weather track
3. Weather locomotives to show wear and tear
4. Industrial details add interest
5. Add depth to the scene with building flats
6. Note debris and refuse tossed around structures
7. Gray, dark tones, and weathering suggest an industrial area

The upper-level loop features O-72 curves and highlights a family farm being slowly developed into industry and housing.

1. Vary colors of ground cover (light brown belongs to the family farm; dark brown to the industry)
2. Add static grass and ground cover close to the structure to suggest neglect/lack of use
3. Glue ground cover up the structure's side to suggest climbing vines
4. Simple dirt road with grass suggests rural atmosphere
5. Overall use of earth tones sets the mood



The attractive Lionel No. 2133 Illuminated Freight Station was introduced by Model Products Corp. of General Mills in 1972. In appearance and operation, it had much in common with the No. 133 Passenger Station from the postwar era.



Identifying Lionel's No. 2133 Illuminated Freight Station

CONFUSION SURROUNDS THIS MODERN-ERA ACCESSORY

STORY BY MARK SUEK // PHOTOS BY CODY GRIVNO AND MARK SUEK

The Lionel No. 2133 Illuminated Freight Station, despite being a common sight on O gauge layouts, has a bit of mystery surrounding it. Stated more emphatically, I contend that this basic accessory is one of the most misidentified items in the long history of Lionel.

The 2133 was cataloged by Model Products Corp. and Fundimensions (the divisions of General Mills handling production and marketing of Lionel trains)

every year from 1972 through 1984, except 1979. During that span, the accessory was described as an illuminated station, a combination station, a passenger station, a suburban station, a freight station, or any combination thereof.

Many similar train stations introduced over the past five decades share the same structure as the 2133. The latter can, in turn, be viewed as following the design of two postwar classics: the Nos. 132 Passenger Station (cataloged 1949 to 1955) and

133 Passenger Station (cataloged in 1957, 1961-62, and 1966). Interestingly, this connection (especially to the 133) explains why the 2133 Illuminated Freight Station has long been misidentified — unintentionally or otherwise.

SHARED COMPONENTS

The 2133 shares several plastic components as well as its color scheme with the 133. Both stations have white walls, green trim around frosted windows, green doors

and roof, and a green chimney with, most often, a maroon base.

Also, the identifying stamp on the white underside of the 2133 reads “133 Illuminated Station” with Lionel’s New York address. This is one of the primary reasons hobbyists confuse the two stations: They see the postwar number “133” and address on the underside of the base and naturally assume it is the older item.

Their confusion is understandable, because MPC and Fundimensions were using leftover parts from the 1960s to manufacture the 2133 stations efficiently and economically. Furthermore, the item’s instruction sheet had not been updated.

MAJOR DIFFERENCES

There are differences between the 2133 and 133. They relate to the illuminating lamp and socket inside the station, the internal metal support beam between the front and rear walls, and the size and design of the “Lionelville” stickers for the signs at both ends of the removable roof.

A 133 has a bayonet-style light bulb (nibs on a brass base and push-and-twist installation) and corresponding metal socket protruding downward through the center of the metal support beam as well as a quarter-size hole in the white underside. The “Lionelville” stickers on a 133 are red with gold lettering and gold outline trim. They’re large enough to almost completely cover the green signs.

Hobbyists sometimes replace the green chimney, whose color matches that of the roof and trim, with a brick-red chimney taken from a 132 station. They do so to make the appearance of the later illuminated station seem more realistic.

A 2133 station comes with a clip-on light-bulb socket attached to one edge of the support beam. In addition, its “Lionelville” stickers (also used on MPC and Fundimensions versions of the postwar Nos. 125 Whistling Freight Shed and 145 Automatic Gateman) are much shorter than their postwar counterparts and lack gold trim along the edges. In fact, much of each green sign is visible on a 2133, as the stickers were most often placed at the top or bottom of the sign. A final point: if the hole in the bottom has been filled, the station is a 2133 produced after 1972.

EARLY 2133S

When the 2133 first appeared in 1972, it was named a “Freight Station” in the Lionel catalog, even though the structure was clearly a combination passenger and freight station. The earliest models continued to sport the hole in the bottom of the building. The support beam between the front and rear walls was made of shiny metal, and the metal light-bulb socket was clipped to one edge. The lamp installed remained the same as what was used by Lionel technicians on the 133.

Changes were made very late in 1972.

To begin, the support beam was now black, the lamp socket was switched to black plastic (exceptions have been reported), and the corresponding bulb was a push-in grain-of-wheat type. The new socket-and-lamp arrangement made it possible to reduce the cost of production. In addition, the green roof and trim on some stations seemed duller than before.

LATER 2133S

Stations associated with 1973-75 production featured window trim, doors, a chimney and a roof whose color was more like a flat pea green, which seemed more realistic to some collectors. Also, the hole in the bottom had been filled with plastic (neatly at first and later in a less careful and thorough manner). The black plastic clip-on socket and grain-of-wheat bulb used late in 1972 remained the rule.

Over the final nine years Fundimensions cataloged the 2133 station, it used a gray support beam while changing the roof, window trim, chimney, and door to the shade of green known as “Deepwater” or “Penn Central.” The color of the station base, formerly maroon, could best be described as reddish brown.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The boxes used for the 2133 station, made initially by Stone Container Corp., can help date examples. Stations produced early in 1972 came in a white cardboard



Notable differences between the Lionel No. 133 Passenger Station (left) and the 2133 (right) include the shade of the green plastic used for the roof (it was darker on the 133) and the size and design of the “Lionelville” stickers for the signs at both ends of the roof. The green chimney on the 133 has been replaced by a red one from a No. 132 Passenger Station (cataloged from 1949 through 1955).

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Other differences between the 133 (left) and the 2133 (right) become apparent when you're looking at the underside of their bases. The filled-in hole identifies the 2133.

box with a drawing of the station on it; those produced later that year came in a box with a black-and-white photograph of a nicely lighted station.

Ironically, the printing on both types of boxes referred to the 2133 as an "Illuminated Freight Station" (indicated by the bottom stamping) rather than a "Lighted Freight Station" (stated in the Lionel catalog). Beginning in 1973, boxes showed a color rendering of a lighted station with railroad freight cars behind.

The story didn't conclude in 1984. The station returned to the line in 1989, heralded by Lionel Trains Inc. as the No. 12728 Illuminated Freight Station. The newcomer, cataloged for only one year, sported a new color scheme consisting of tan walls, a green base, and a brown roof, chimney, window trim, and doors.

Next, cataloged from 1993 through 2000, was the No. 12812, known as "Freight Station with Lights" or "Illu-

minated Freight Station." It's visually appealing, thanks to its butterscotch-colored walls; tan window trim, doors, and chimney; relatively dark green roof; and chocolate brown base.

Then there was the No. 12762 Freight Station with Train Control and Sounds, listed in the catalog issued by Lionel Trains Inc. for 1990. Based on the 2133, it had a white structure with gray trim plus a black base. LTI planned to add a train-stop device (not seen since the postwar 132) and several prerecorded station announcements. Too bad the company chose not to make the 12762.

Greenberg's Pocket Price Guide to Lionel Trains, 1901-2027 values a 2133 Lighted Freight Station at \$44 in like-new condition and \$34 in excellent. The same reference book values a 133 Passenger Station at \$43 in excellent condition and a 132 Passenger Station at \$92 in excellent. **CTT**

Boxes can date 2133 stations. In 1972, they were white cardboard and had a drawing or a black-and-white photo of the station. In 1973, they were white cardboard with a color rendering of a lighted station with freight cars behind.



Lionel No. 773 4-6-4 Hudson steam engine and tender

O gauge classic from 1950 revived Walt Urban Jr.'s passion for toy trains

BY ROGER CARP



Lionel's No. 773 4-6-4 Hudson steam engine and tender from 1950 look fantastic to Walt Urban Jr. (featured in the September 2023 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*). The 773 is the locomotive he loves best among those on his roster. William Zuback photo

Lionel's No. 773 4-6-4 Hudson steam engine and tender from 1950 did much to revive the passion dedicated O gauge modeler Walt Urban Jr. has for toy trains. He says that hobbyists like him, who grew up during the 1950s, recall the thrill of waking up on Christmas morning to see what Santa had left under the tree.

Walt describes his greatest memory as the anticipation of a new train that would find its way on the track mounted on a sheet of platform arranged so it supported a tree decorated with ornaments. Walt learned at an early age tinsel and electric trains were not compatible!

Walt's formative years were spent growing up in a modest rowhouse in Philadelphia. "My father was in the truck repair business, and my mother was a traditional stay-at-home mom. Our family's resources were limited, but there was always something from Lionel on Christmas morning."

Walt was only a year old in 1950, when Lionel introduced the 773. "I remember my mother would take my younger sister and me to the department stores in downtown Philadelphia after Thanksgiving. Stores like Wanamaker's and Gimbel's had

huge Lionel layouts when I was in grade school. I learned of the Lionel Hudson and never forgot it."

What makes the year 1950 noteworthy was that it marked the 50th anniversary of the founding of what became the Lionel Corp. Co-founder Joshua Lionel Cowen wanted to celebrate by introducing an updated version of the prewar No. 700E O scale New York Central Hudson. The best way to do so was the highly detailed 773, which Lionel paired with the equally elaborate No. 2426W tender.

Not able to afford this locomotive when it was introduced, Walt had to wait decades until he could add a 773 from 1950 to his O gauge roster. He was attending the show held by the Eastern Division of the Train Collectors Association in York, Pa., when he found a superb example of the Hudson and tender in their original boxes with the master carton.

What struck Walt, he states, "was the size. My 773 dwarfed the other O gauge locomotives from the postwar era that I

owned, including the Nos. 726 and 736 Berkshires and 681 Turbine." Impressive features of the 773 in Walt's eyes were the valve gear guides on the steam chest and the highly detailed boiler front and trailing truck. No wonder Cowen considered the Hudson his favorite.

Walt brought home his new treasure and set out to lubricate and service the 773. "Disassembling the Hudson to perform basic maintenance," he writes, "was very different from working on my Lionel Berkshires of the same vintage. Fortunately for me, the *Lionel Service Manual* provided plenty of information that

made the process of breaking down and lubricating the 773 straightforward." It is, in Walt's view, still a masterpiece.

That's the reason why watching his 773 as it pulls postwar Madison heavyweight passenger cars around his O gauge layout sparks memories in Walt of Christmases past when he was younger. He praises the Lionel Hudson as a reflection of the great age of steam and a world less complicated than the one we live in today. **CTT**

MY 773 DWARFED THE OTHER O GAUGE LOCOMOTIVES FROM THE POSTWAR ERA THAT I OWNED.



Long trains made up almost entirely of weathered hoppers loaded with coal can be seen on two of the upper levels of the O gauge layout at Mr. Muffin's Trains. Don't miss all the structures, vehicles, figures, and other neat details below. Photo courtesy Stephen Nelson

An interview with Mr. Muffin's Trains

A family-owned business with a "hobbyists first" mentality

BY LUCAS IVERSON

Mr. Muffin's Trains of Atlanta, Ind., is a family-owned business with a retail store, an O gauge train layout, and an online store. Stephen and Liz Nelson (Mr. and Mrs. Muffin, respectively) spoke with Trains.com Assistant Digital Editor Lucas Iverson.

Q: For readers who may not be familiar with your business, what are the types of services you provide to customers?

Stephen: We are principally an O gauge store, though we've also expanded into HO. We provide retail (both in-store and online), sales and support for those product lines. We answer a lot of questions about our wide product line, as I'm one of the few dealers you can call and actually get on the phone.

We do a great deal of social media. For example, I host open-mic office hours on Fridays, and about 150 people log in

for that. We also have a "Chat with the Muffins" session on Facebook and YouTube on Wednesday nights. We run trains at the layout [in a building near the store] on Saturdays at 2:00 p.m.

Q: How did Mr. Muffin's Trains get its start?

Stephen: As an executive in the technology field, I had to get a [break] from work.

I started in HO in 1988, built a layout, and had a big collection. I got frustrated with keeping the small trains on the track and decided to sell all my HO stuff and get out of model railroading.

There was a thing called eBay, and I decided to sell there. My middle son, Jeff, told me that I couldn't use my real name as the handle. When the kids were little, I used to make up bedtime stories about muffins. So, he thought it would be cool to make my eBay handle "MrMuffinsTrains."

In 2000, I got back into model railroading with O gauge. But then I thought that maybe I didn't want to do that either. I took the layout down, put everything in storage, and got ready to sell it all.

Then I met Liz, 12 years ago, who saw the equipment and asked, "Do you want to build a layout?" She soon rented an 1,800-square-foot building in Carmel, Ind., and we built a public layout. It was crazy popular and beautiful. But it was a pretty small space.

Liz rented a 5,400-square-foot building nearby, with an escalating lease on it. We built the second public layout, but one day I asked her, "Exactly how are we going to

pay for this? This building costs more than our mortgage."

I talked to Andy Edelman [from Atlas] about this, and he said, "Why don't you

become an O gauge dealer?" Liz and I like to say that we are reluctant retailers. But it was a way to support the layout and gave us a chance to promote model railroading for families.

The City of Carmel decided to tear our second building down. The good news was it got us out of the rent. The bad news was we had to move. We found three vacant buildings in Atlanta and bought them all. Now we're in our fourth building.

Q: What are the key takeaways to the business's success and growth?

Stephen: We're [for] hobbyists first. We build and operate a layout, and we use the electronics. I started working in a toy and hobby shop when I was 12 years old, so

I've been around the hobby a long time. I think that's the difference. When you're talking to us, you're talking to people who are in the hobby and have all the same experiences and needs.

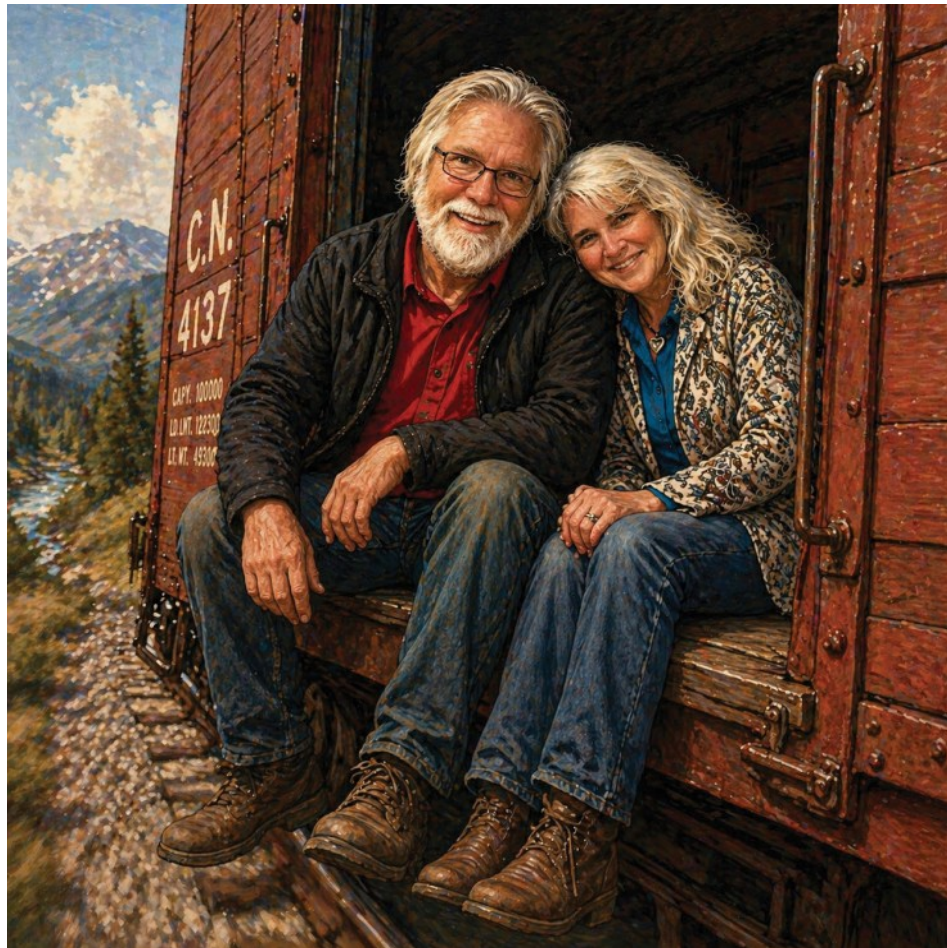
Liz: What's been really interesting is talking to

wives and daughters who are looking at the [current layout's] scenery and are like, "I can do this." We really enjoy watching families come together over it. When we started with our layout, it was just to promote the hobby, and I think we've really achieved that. People still come into the store and want to get started.



Stephen and Liz Nelson own and operate Mr.

Muffin's Trains in Atlanta, Ind. Photo courtesy Stephen Nelson



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We are in the hobby, too!

Q: How did you get into the business of custom runs of trains? What is involved with the process of choosing a model and road name to be offered?

Stephen: When we started, I called MTH and said, “You guys don’t make much stuff for Monon [Indiana’s railroad], and I have a lot of Monon customers. What about making some just for me and them?”

MTH worked with us and made an O gauge passenger train set, *Thoroughbred*, that once ran from Chicago to Louisville. MTH did a lot of work to get the artwork correct. We sold 110 preorders with David Letterman buying two. That was a big win!

We then asked MTH to make more stuff for us and later had the same conversations with Atlas and Lionel.

The process is manufacturers decide what they want to produce. They’re not making anything unique for us, as we are participating with an announced run. We’re looking online to find different road names or getting ideas from customers.

It’s an enormous amount of work because as soon as a manufacturer gets a product in their schedule, we have to figure out if we can do anything with it. But it’s still really satisfying.

Q: Would you provide some background regarding your store layout and what the public can expect when visiting it?

Stephen: The main layout is 40 feet by 60 feet. [It was featured in *Great Layouts You Can Visit*, a special-interest publication from *Classic Toy Trains* in 2025.] This is our third public layout and the largest. Liz and I built it ourselves, and we pretty much had trains running in four months. It’s all Lionel Legacy and MTH Digital Command System with 13 independent loop tracks. Normally on a Saturday, we’ll run 20 trains, though we can run up to 50. The second layout is 20 feet by 100 feet, again with both Legacy and DCS.

Liz: The interesting thing is that people who visit frequently will come up and say, “Oh, this is new.” Actually, it’s not. They manage to find something new every time they come.

We run the layouts on Saturdays only, but we’ll also open them by appointment if asked. We’ve had a lot of interesting groups through here, and it’s really fascinating to watch them.



Whenever visitors to Mr. Muffin's Trains in Atlanta, Ind., decide to take a short break from watching all the activity on the sprawling O gauge model railroad, they can check out the thousands of models on display. Photo courtesy Stephen Nelson

We get families that come through. A lot of times, grandparents point to an engine or train and will say, “I rode the *Emerald Crescent* when I was a child. That’s how we traveled.” The kids are in awe when listening to every word. The next thing we know, grandpa is back here with the grandkids, and they’re getting ready to build a layout.

Q: What are the challenges the two of you face to keep the doors open for Mr. Muffin’s Trains?

Stephen: In our world the [physical] store is really gravy. The online sales and preorders are the bread and butter. That’s what’s paying everybody’s salary. The fact that we have a retail store is a good thing. We have good days there and sell a bunch of stuff. However, we’re not relying on the store to carry the enterprise.

Liz: All the same, there’s also still a need for our physical store. We have a lot of customers that will make a detour in their trip just to come to the store. So there is some impulse purchasing going on. It’s really good because it gives people an idea of what they can do and what’s out there.

Q: What does the future hold for Mr. Muffin’s Trains?

Stephen: I think we’re going to continue to grow. HO is going to grow. Obviously, it’s a bigger market than O. If we can get a handle on it, that will be good. We’re going to start doing social media around HO and custom runs for that scale.

We got a local guy that is 3-D printing buildings, and we are selling those for him, both online and in-store. We can support the hobby by helping other people get their products to market.

There’s a gentleman in Canada, who retired 15 years ago, whom we convinced to let us make his kits again. Or if he really wants to retire, we can pick up his backlog and inventory and let him easily ride off into the sunset.

Obviously, we also have some family members who are invested in the future of our business, and so we believe it’s going to carry on beyond us. In fact, I’m pretty confident it will all keep going. **CTT**

RESOURCES

Custom runs in the toy train hobby, Trains.com
Great Layouts You Can Visit, special issue, shop.Trains.com
 Interview with Mr. Muffin's Trains (video), Trains.com

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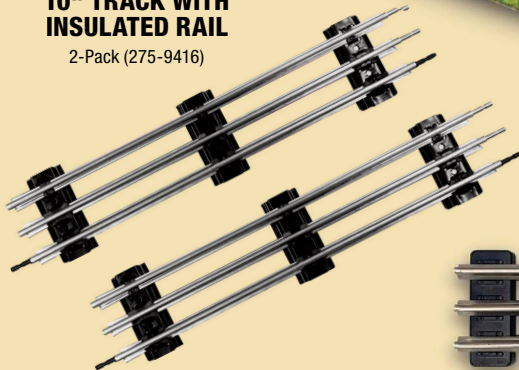
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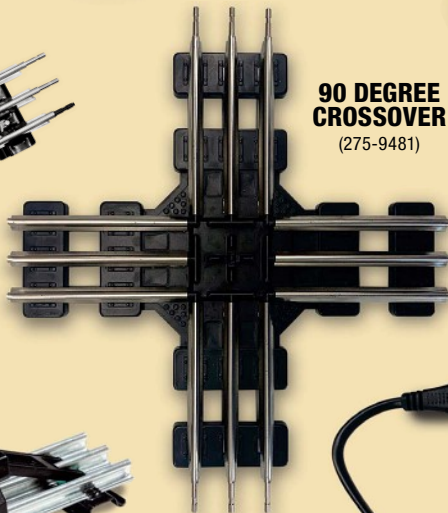
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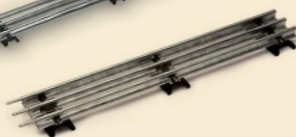
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LIONEL SET COMFORTED FOUR LITTLE GIRLS IN 1959

WINNING A PRIZE BROUGHT HOPE TO A FAMILY

STORY BY ROGER CARP // PHOTO BY BILL ZUBACK



Lionel's promotional staff, under the leadership of Frank Lynch and then Joe Kavanagh, saw the value of offering train sets and even dealer display layouts as prizes in consumer contests in the late 1950s. In 1959, as I explain in *Return to the Golden Years*, the latest 100-page special-interest publication from *Classic Toy Trains* (coming fall 2026), the company collaborated with a few large producers of consumer goods to remind families of the value of its toy trains.

Perhaps the best known of the contests using Lionel products as prizes was one sponsored by General Mills to promote its brand-new Cocoa Puffs cereal. Lionel sold to the consumer good conglomerate several hundred items at extreme discounts, with the grand prize being a No. D-265 8 x 8-foot Super O layout. In *Display Layouts and Showrooms*, a special-interest publication from CTT first made available in 2024, the two brothers who won that classic display were profiled.

There were many different prizes with other winners. A 4 x 6-foot O-27 layout with a Wabash GP7 freight set went to each of the 100 second-prize winners. The

650 third-prize winners each received the same No. 1601W cataloged five-car set, inventory left over from the previous year. This is the story of one winner — a surprised little girl.

TOUGH TIMES

The autumn of 1959, when specially marked boxes of Cocoa Puffs began filling shelves in grocery stores across the U.S. and Canada, was a particularly challenging time for a family in Maryland. As Elizabeth Gordon explains, her father had suffered a stroke the previous year and remained hospitalized for more than six months. Her mother was striving to make home life seem normal for three-year-old Elizabeth and her three young sisters.

The contest advertised on those cereal boxes — to name the

three young cartoon characters serving as mascots for Cocoa Puffs — could serve as a terrific diversion for the children, worrying about their father's health and paying for his ultimate recovery.

Elizabeth doesn't remember what names her mother submitted. She does believe they contained many of the letters in the four girls' names, scrambled to create amusing names for the mascots. Clever as the idea was, it failed to capture any of the major prizes being offered.

All the same, the judges must have been somewhat impressed because boxes addressed to Elizabeth started to be delivered to the family home. Elizabeth still has no notion of why they had her name on them. "My mother was horrified, not knowing what had been ordered or how she was going to pay the bill. But as soon as I saw the packages I knew we



Trains, from Lionel to Amtrak, have been wonderful parts of Elizabeth's life for as long as she can remember. Her favorite is still the prize her family named, "Lizzie's train."



The Lionel No. 1601W Wabash diesel freight set, originally cataloged for 1958, ended up being used as a prize in a contest sponsored by General Mills just a year later. One of the winners was the family of Elizabeth Gordon, who continues to treasure the O-27 train.

had won one of the Lionel trains that was described in the Cocoa Puffs contest.”

Fortunately for Elizabeth and her three sisters, their father had regained sufficient strength and hand-eye coordination by then that he managed to construct for the family a rudimentary operating layout on a 4 x 4-foot sheet of plywood. The trains were a hit for Christmas.

QUITE A PRIZE

The Lionel train set was as much of an unexpected delight for three-year-old Elizabeth in 1959 as the SR47 Sears display described elsewhere in this issue had been for an older girl a dozen years before. And in both cases, their families treasured the Lionel items long after those kids reached adulthood and continued to run the locomotive and cars.

The 1601W set awarded to Elizabeth's family used a No. 2337 Wabash GP7 road diesel to pull four cars and a No. 6017 Southern Pacific-type caboose. In addition to a No. 6464-425 New Haven boxcar, there were three flatcars with great loads: Nos. 6800 with an airplane, 6801 with a boat, and 6810 with a van.

Included with the entertaining train were eight sections of curved track, three sections of straight track, and a No. 6029 Remote Control Uncoupling Track. There were, in addition, a No. 1053 60-Watt Transformer as well as instruction sheets.

Elizabeth looks back with a smile when thinking about how the Wabash train set

captivated her parents and sisters every Christmas well into the late 1960s. Sadly, her father died in 1967, and the locomotive and its cars were packed away for several years.

RECENT REVIVAL

Anyone familiar with Lionel locomotives that used a dry-cell battery to generate the sounds of the horn knows what happened to the Wabash GP7 while it sat in storage. The old battery leaked fluid that ruined the motor — something Elizabeth's father had prevented by removing the battery after every holiday season.

Luckily for Elizabeth, when she called a radio station during a program about toy trains, a friend listening came to her rescue by contacting Lars Anderson, an expert on repairing Lionel and other brands with more than half a century of experience. He fixed the damaged motor, put in a new battery, and examined the vintage transformer as well.

Elizabeth, whose love of trains large and small encompasses traveling on Amtrak and a cab ride on a diesel switcher in Arkansas during her youth, is thrilled her Cocoa Puffs prize is back at full strength. She cherishes the O-27 set and hopes one day to pass it down to her grandchildren. For now, however, she's content to keep operating the handsome freight train and appreciate its story and the memories of her parents it revives with every trip around the track. **CTT**



The contest, which asked participants to create names for the three cartoon mascots promoting Cocoa Puffs, was announced on specially marked boxes of that new cereal. Lionel provided 751 prizes, including 650 examples of the 1601W set that Elizabeth won.

Building a child's **DREAM LAYOUT**



STEVE PAPA ANIMATES EVERY LIONEL ACCESSORY

STORY BY ROGER CARP
PHOTOS BY JOSEPHINE WINTER



A visit to Steve Papa's 840-square-foot Standard and O gauge layout begins with one mighty claim and immediately proceeds to a second one. To appreciate what this longtime hobbyist has accomplished, you must acknowledge the legitimacy of both claims. Then you will see the greatness in what he has built at his home.

The first claim is a fundamental and common one among toy train lovers. Namely, that every youngster who has ever dreamed of owning the perfect layout no matter the gauge envisioned it filled with accessories. Signals, light towers, bridges, freight loaders, stations, you name it. The second claim flows from the first. Steve has designed a perfect layout for any boy or girl—or himself! He has finished an enormous and action-packed display he says has almost every accessory Lionel ever cataloged.

To Steve's credit and the delight of folks who drop by his spacious and comfortable home to first admire and then usually ask to run his 24 x 35-foot layout, he refused to limit himself to only what Lionel made. Accessories from American Flyer, Ives, K-Line, and MTH among others are also there. What kid, no matter when he or she lived, wouldn't have taken one look at Steve's layout and insisted it was their dream come true?

DIFFERENT START

After gazing at his three-rail extravaganza, Steve admits sheepishly that things didn't start like this. When as an adult he became serious about the hobby and joined the Train Collectors Association in 1971, he hardly imagined a layout on par with what he has now. Sure, it was going to have lots of accessories, but would it end up the size of a parking lot? Not in a million years!

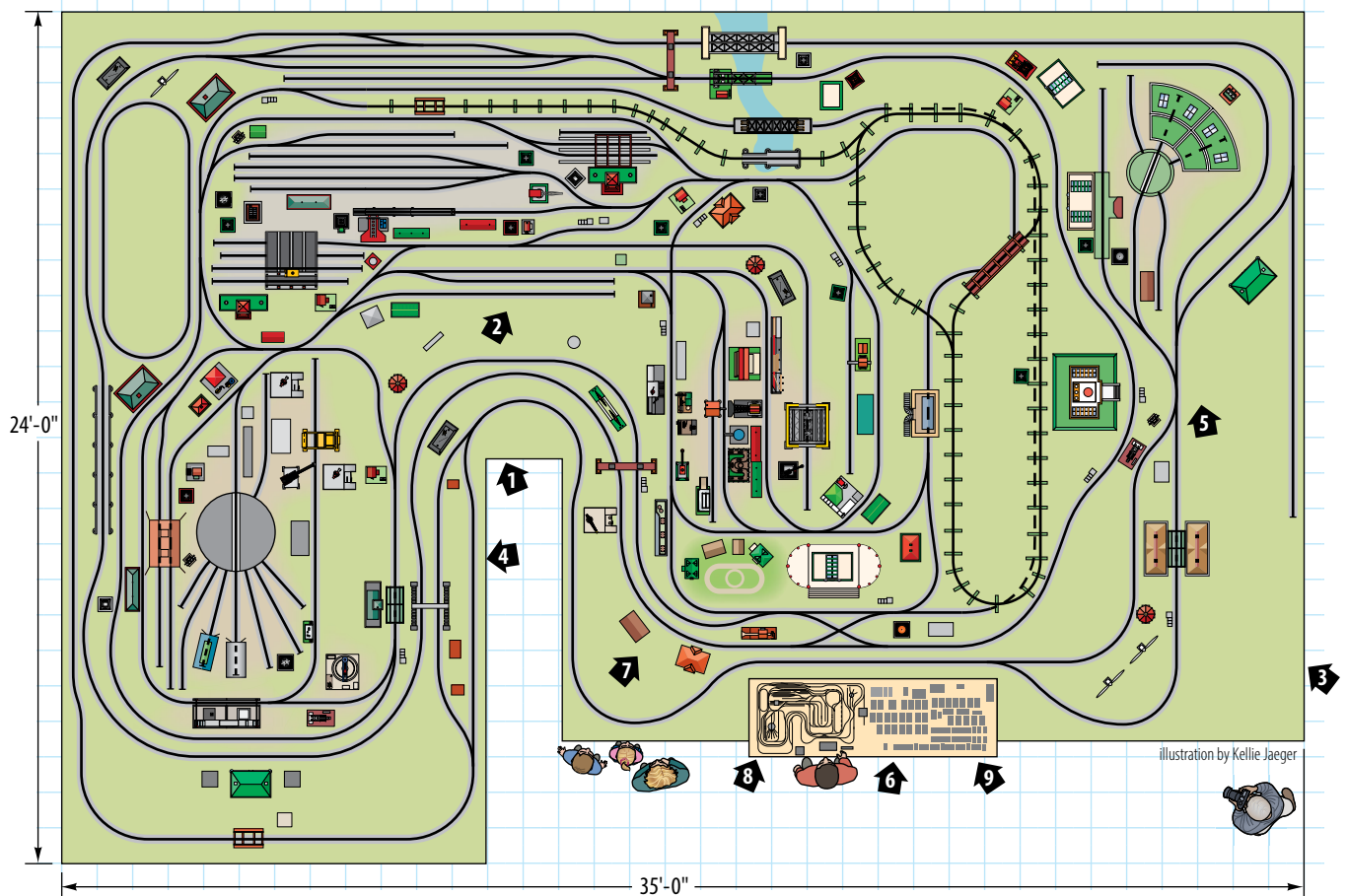
Looking back, Steve says he could never have believed he would ever see, much less own, a layout as extensive and entertaining as what he has today. He started with electric trains in quite a different way growing up during the 1950s. When just a year old, Steve received a basic Marx set. A year later in 1952, his parents "upgraded" his roster with a Lionel No. 2187WS five-car freight outfit.

Steve ran his O gauge set over a loop of tubular track nailed to a 4 x 8-foot sheet of plywood. That was it! No switches and no sidings where animated cars performed on



1 The photo backdrop that Steve added to the wall behind his layout neatly suggests the scene stretches out for miles. His yard is immense, with long rows of three-rail track accommodating several prewar freight and passenger trains as well as a postwar No. 1587S Lady Lionel. Don't miss the No. 2331 Virginian Train Master in the foreground.

2 Gliding along one of the main lines of Steve Papa's 24 x 35-foot O and Standard gauge layout is a stunning Lionel No. 396E *Blue Comet* passenger train.



Steve Papa requires several transformers from Lionel and MTH Electric Trains to power his 24 x 35-foot O and Standard gauge home layout. The numbered arrows correspond to the numbers in each of the captioned photos taken by his wife, Josephine Winter.



3 Steve has spent more than half a century collecting the extraordinary variety of accessories filling every nook and niche of his layout. There are so many operating signals, towers, and freight loaders, not to mention the structures, that you can barely see him.

AT A GLANCE

Steve Papa's O and Standard gauge layout

Dimensions: 24 x 35 feet

Track: GarGraves, Lionel (maximum diameter 72 inches)

Switches: Lionel, Ross Custom Switches

Motive power: Ives, Lionel (all eras), MTH

Rolling stock: Ives, Lionel (all eras), MTH

Controls: Lionel KW and ZW transformers, MTH No. Z-4000 power pack, with Lionel TMCC and Legacy, MTH DCS

Accessories: American Flyer, K-Line, Lionel, Marklin, MTH, Ross Custom Switches

Structures: American Flyer, Bing, Department 56, Ives, K-Line, Lionel, Marklin, MTH

Vehicles: Department 56, Matchbox

Figures: Department 56, Lemax, Life-Like, Lionel



4 Awaiting their turn on the turntable this morning are some of the greatest and most desirable Lionel locomotives of the postwar era. Regal in appearance are the Nos. 2373 Canadian Pacific and 2379 Denver & Rio Grande Western F3 diesels.

cue. The sole operating item was a Lionel No. 362 Barrel Loader.

Years passed as Steve finished his education and launched a successful career. When he felt confident about purchasing his first home, plans for a layout or two filled his mind. During the final decades of the 20th century, Steve set out to construct a pair of layouts that would reflect his favorite gauges. Along with a Standard gauge display measuring 10 x 12 feet, he built a companion O gauge layout measuring 12 x 25 feet. Scenery and structures

were prominent elements on each, as were vintage and new accessories.

BLENDING TIME

Steve might have been content as the new century dawned with having two layouts whose look and operation complemented each other. They provided him with plenty of enjoyment while offering real estate for additional accessories.

Somehow, though, Steve felt a bit frustrated with the need to service and maintain two layouts when he concluded that a

single model railroad could do all the tricks he desired. The solution Steve and his wife, Josephine, devised was for him to tear down the current displays and blend all the accessories and much of the track in a new landscaped and expertly wired dual-gauge layout. There, his animated pieces would be the stars amid vast networks of three-rail tubular track.

The benchwork was going to be, Steve vowed, as solid and elementary as he could make it. He intended to frame it out of 2 x 4 pieces of lumber. Then on top of the



5 A Lionel No. 9 electric pulling orange passenger cars winds by Nos. 116 Station, 155 Freight Shed, and 444 Roundhouse sections.



6 Check out the gleaming set of subway cars from MTH Electric Trains passing by King Kong climbing up a skyscraper.



7 Drifting by are two highly desirable O gauge freight cars from late in the prewar era. Steve directs our attention to the Nos. 2814R white refrigerator car with a brown roof and the 2814 boxcar with an orange body, a brown roof, and rubber-stamped lettering.



8 Pausing by Steve's control panel so we can admire them are a Lionel No. 4 0-4-0 dark gray electric engine and dark green passenger cars with maroon detailing. Near the O gauge train you can see a No. 129 Terrace with a No. 115 Station.

open-grid foundation he laid 4 x 8 sheets of plywood. Steve followed by covering them with what he calls "soundboard." The main level was going to rise 33 inches from the floor; the elevated areas would be approximately 7 inches higher.

Original Standard and O gauge track — straights and curves, switches and cross-overs — appealed to Steve. He stockpiled sections over many years for his layout, though in a spot or two he opted to use

modern flextrack from GarGraves. Regarding track diameters, Steve recalls them ranging from 31 up to 72 inches.

TRADITION AND INNOVATION

The same wish to blend tradition with innovation characterizes Steve's attitude when it comes to operating his enormous layout. In addition to various postwar transformers, he depends on different brands of command control. He installed

components of Lionel's TrainMaster Command Control and its Legacy system before adding the Digital Command System from MTH Electric Trains.

A good number of main lines and lots of sidings demanded the best kind of wiring if operating was going to proceed reliably and enjoyably. Steve read about the star pattern outlined by the bright minds at MTH. He thus could avoid having to solder dozens of feeder wires for the vast network of three-rail track.

More to the point, Steve thoughtfully designed the dual-gauge layout to consist of almost 40 individual electrical blocks. He sought to control them manually, and so each block has an on/off switch wired to his large control panel.

Signals are another matter. Despite going out of his way to install one of every sort of signal that Lionel has ever manufactured, Steve minimized the importance of ensuring they all operated realistically. He preferred to include them for "show" purposes, along with a few prewar pieces from Ives and modern ones from MTH Electric Trains.

PERSONAL PRIORITIES

Steve clearly has made collecting vintage accessories his top priority in the hobby. Carefully installing and wiring them so they operate dependably and consistently became equally as important to him when creating his big layout.



9 Spend some time studying this sprawling area of Steve's layout. You're certain to recognize coal loaders from the American Flyer and Lionel product lines, along with water towers, magnetic cranes, stations, and much more.

Landscaping turned out to be less essential in Steve's eyes. Not that he judged scenery irrelevant to the excellence of his three-rail layout. Only that he wasn't interested in investing large sums of money or vast numbers of hours in forming a miniature version of New England, Appalachia, or the Southwest.

Consequently, Steve's descriptions of how he developed the landforms, forests, and waterways are succinct and general. To begin, he relied heavily on scenic pieces, including tunnels, that Lionel marketed fully finished and painted. Only where necessary to complete key areas did Steve buy products from Scenic Express

and other firms he read about in *Classic Toy Trains* and other magazines.

Commercial items served for flat areas covered with grass or left bare. Mats and ground cover, trees, polished rocks, and dirt were a breeze to add. Steve opts for products from Scenic Express.

Finally, Steve created water by painting recessed areas in the main level with latex paints. Next, he coated the areas with clear polyurethane. Roadways were painted on or added sections from Department 56.

FUN FOR EVERYONE

The purpose of Steve's outstanding layout, as he is the first to admit, is to entertain.

And nothing in the toy train hobby is more entertaining than operating accessories. Children know this instinctively, and marketers quickly figure it out.

Little wonder that Steve, remembering the endless hours of fun his Lionel barrel loader gave him as a youngster, has kept expanding his roster of fantastic accessories from every era of production. There will always be empty space on his Standard and O gauge display for another station or signal or loader — just about anything guaranteed to bring a smile to the face of a child or an adult. It's all part of this dedicated modeler's aim of creating a layout for everyone. **CTT**



National Association of S Gaugers Executive Vice President Lou Templeton showcases part of his American Flyer collection.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE National Association of S Gaugers

THIS ORGANIZATION SUPPORTS 1:64 SCALE TRAINS

STORY BY R. JAMES WHIPPLE // PHOTOS BY LOU TEMPLETON

The National Association of S Gaugers (NASG) is a tax-exempt membership organization whose main goal is to support model trains built to a scale of 1:64 and expand interest in these outstanding locomotives and cars. To appreciate the achievements of the NASG and shed light on its history, an understanding of the development of S scale is necessary. Let's spotlight what many hobbyists laud as the perfect scale for layouts.

HISTORY OF S SCALE

The story behind S scale, originally named "C-D" scale (Cleveland-Designed), dates back 90 years. The Cleveland Model & Supply Co. published plans for model trains running on 7/8-inch gauge track in

1936. The plans were followed a year later by kits made of paper, balsa, and pine.

In December of 1937, toymaker A.C. Gilbert acquired the assets of the American Flyer Manufacturing Co. from William O. Coleman. The next year, the A.C. Gilbert Co. in New Haven, Conn., started producing 1:64 trains that used O gauge trucks. Gilbert marketed them under the name "Tru-Model," as they were accurate representations of railroad equipment.

By 1943, the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) had changed the name of the scale from "C-D" to "S" and adopted a set of engineering standards derived from upscaling its HO standards. After World War II, German, English, and French companies started making S scale trains, but they didn't make much head-

way given the popularity of HO scale.

For 1946, the Gilbert Co. converted its train line to run on 7/8-inch gauge track and began mass-market production. American Flyer locomotives and cars, while marketed as toys, were accurately scaled models, designed after prototype motive power and rolling stock. Other small companies also made 1:64 models for adults right after World War II.

By the late 1950s, the number of hi-rail operators in S scale had grown, and most of the used American Flyer equipment supplemented with craftsman kits. To share knowledge about S scale, a hobbyist named Claude Wade started a round-robin group of "circuit letters," asking each recipient to add something to the "letter" and forward it to another person. By 1960,



Lou also has a spectacular S gauge layout with a 6-stall roundhouse and turntable.

hundreds of people were involved in some 30 circuits.

At the NMRA national convention held in 1960, a group of S-scalers formed what they called the National Association of S Gaugers and named Wade the general director. While many operators were content with American Flyer's oversized flanges (they were designed as toys, after all), the fact that the locomotives and rolling stock were scale models prompted others to convert their Flyer pieces to NMRA track and wheel standards.

Because the original S scale standards were rudimentary, the NASG set out to improve them during the 1970s. The new

engineering standards were compatible with narrow-gauge operation. They were formally adopted in 1981, followed by standards for modules in 1990.

MEMBER BENEFITS

The NASG, which has an elected board of trustees and an international committee structure to manage its projects and activities, has a dedicated membership. Becoming a member offers certain benefits, including a subscription to *The Dispatch*, its bimonthly magazine, that offers a mix of articles about American Flyer repair and collecting as well as hi-rail modeling and scale construction projects in both standard and narrow gauge.

Besides *The Dispatch* (the only print magazine dedicated to 1:64 scale trains), NASG members have access to the association's website: nasg.org. This extraordinary resource includes a database of every known S scale item manufactured, a database of current manufacturers, news items, product announcements, upcoming events, and an archive of *Dispatch* issues.

In addition, the NASG hosts an annual convention and commissions an annual

freight car from various manufacturers (both hi-rail and scale). Finally, the association maintains a Facebook page and sponsors the Company Store (which sells track gauges and clearance guides, scale rulers, clothing, and other relevant items).

The 1,600 members of NASG look forward to the future growth of the hobby. We invite you to join us! **CTD**



The National Association of S Gaugers is a non-profit, volunteer-led organization that supports operating, collecting, and modeling 1:64 scale model trains. Its logo of clasped couplers states its mission of representing and promoting all interest areas of the hobby. Visit the website at nasg.org to learn more and become a member.

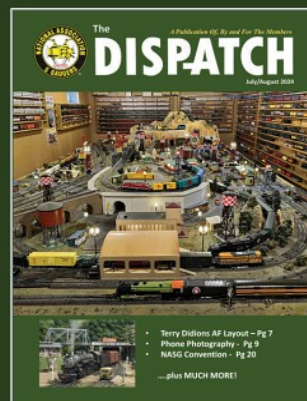
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Layout and Photo by Mike Starr



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Postwar locomotives and rolling stock have stood the test of time, but they still need a bit of care and feeding to perform their best. That often means regular oiling and greasing.



How to lubricate postwar steam locomotives and rolling stock

Regular oiling and greasing will ensure smooth operation

STORY BY LUCAS IVERSON PHOTOS BY CODY GRIVNO

Even a postwar locomotive needs a little maintenance now and then. Here are best practices on how to lubricate postwar locomotives and rolling stock.

In the January 2019 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*, Joseph Mania recommends oiling the ends of the motor's armature shaft. This requires removing the body from the chassis. Use caution to keep the brushes and commutators clean of any oil and grease.

AXLES

Lubricating any O gauge locomotives involves the wheels' bearings and axles. And I mean for all the wheels: Drivers, engine, trailing, and tender trucks. Keep in mind the different placements of the bearing boxes along each axle before sparingly applying the light oil. Labelle Lubricants' Nos. 107 and 108 with needle applicators will get the job done and are available separately or in kits.

RUNNING AND VALVE GEARS

The Labelle oils can be used for the running and valve gears and will prevent debris from finding its way into the constantly rotating parts. For every pin and screw connecting rods and linkages, apply the oil in the tiniest drops possible.

GREASING GEARS

The exposed gears are usually found running along one side of the locomotive's chassis, tucked in-between the drivers and frame. Options can vary in regards to using a light gear lubricant (Labelle No. 102) or micro gear grease with PTFE (Labelle No. 106). I prefer the 102 in preventing debris buildup while saving

the 106 for the more concealed components. Regardless of what you use, remember that less is more when applying.

OILING ROLLING STOCK

Lubricating postwar rolling stock will involve the wheels on each car, normally at the bearings to the wheel axles. Take note of the placement of the bearing boxes along each axle first.

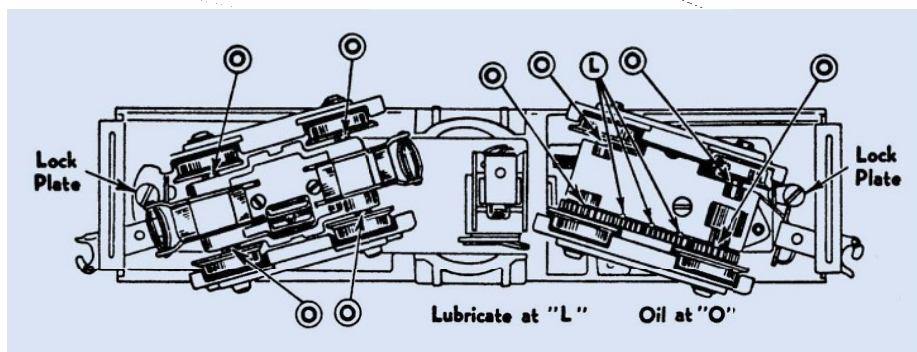
That brings us to the next recommendation: Use light oil to prevent the attraction of debris when running on the track. Labelle Lubricants' Nos. 107 and (occasionally) 108 with needle applicators are my go-to choices for any O gauge cars. They are available either separately or in kits. Apply the oil sparingly.

For illuminated cars, such as lighted coaches, your mileage may vary when lubricating the brackets' pivots on the pickup rollers. This can be due in part to the general rule of keeping the rollers oil-free. If lubrication is needed due to stiffness within the pickup rollers, take great care when applying oil to the pivots.

TAKING THE EQUIPMENT FOR A SPIN

Rotating the wheels afterward will go a long way toward equally distributing the applied oil and grease. Keep in mind that certain locomotive models may have wheels that can't be turned by hand, but instead will need track power and slow operation.

Making a habit of performing the lubrication just before an operating session can help further the distribution throughout the moving components. Of course, regularly lubricating your O gauge postwar steam locomotives can help further a runner's reliability and longevity. **CTT**



Apply a light oil to every pin and screw connecting the multiple rods and linkages, especially the side rods, on your locomotive.



Regardless of which oil product you use, always remember that less is more when lubricating exposed gears.

OWN OTHER TYPES OF LOCOMOTIVES?

If you have modern Lionel/MTH/Atlas steam locomotives, find a full-length article by Contributing Editor Lucas Iverson on Trains.com.

If you own postwar American Flyer locomotives, please consult the detailed article by Joe Mania in the November 2014 issue.

For Marx locomotives, read the Weekend Workshop article in the January 2017 issue.



Keep in mind the different placements of the bearing boxes along each axle before applying a light oil.



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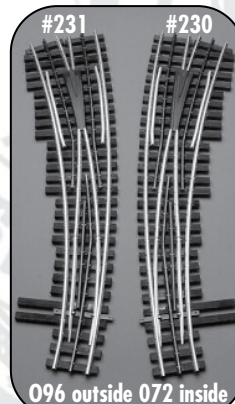
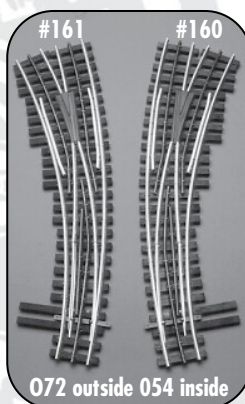
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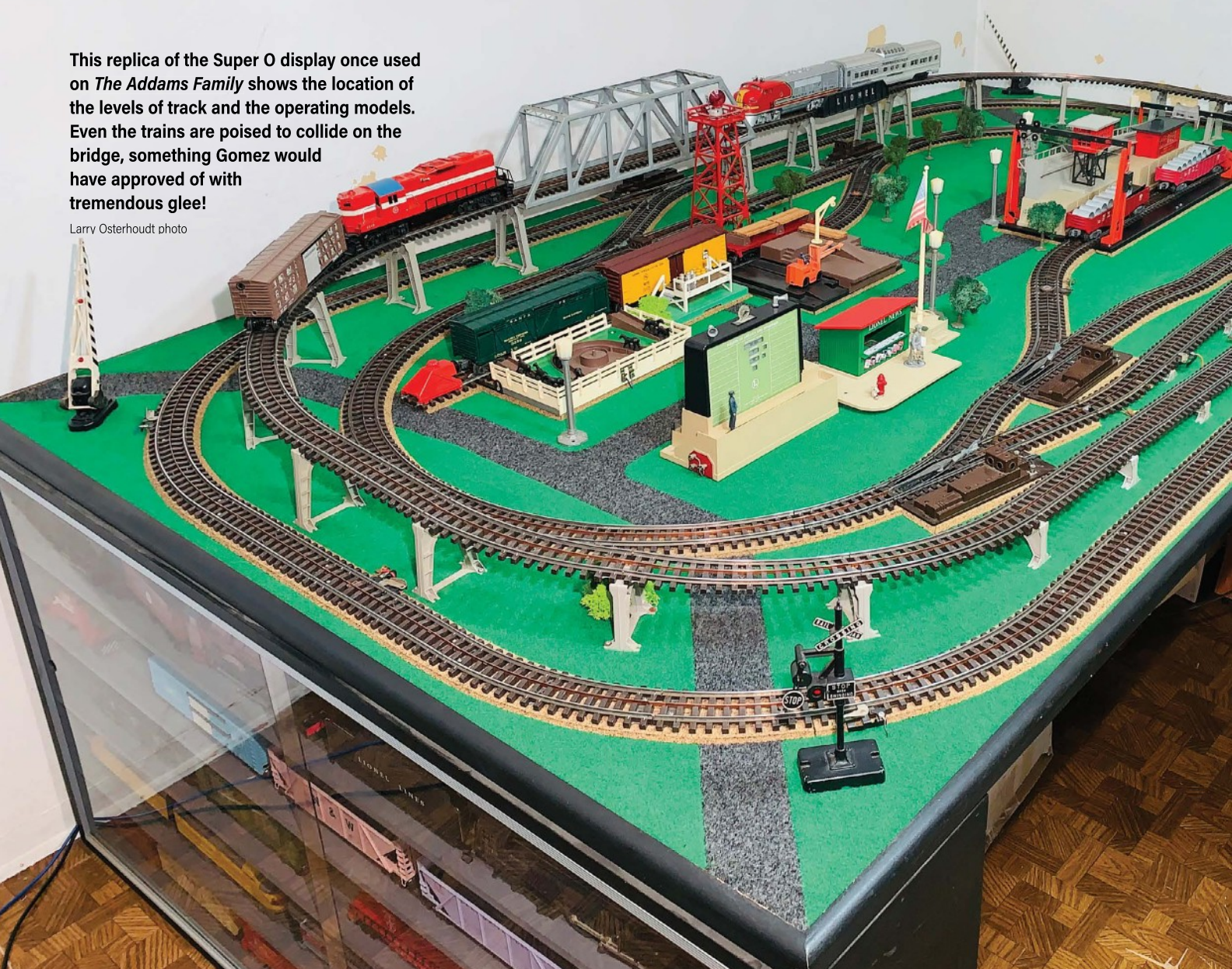
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This replica of the Super O display once used on *The Addams Family* shows the location of the levels of track and the operating models. Even the trains are poised to collide on the bridge, something Gomez would have approved of with tremendous glee!

Larry Osterhoudt photo



NIGHT OF THE MEEK LINES

A TRACK PLAN BASED
ON *THE ADDAMS FAMILY*
TELEVISION SHOW

BY MICHAEL TYLICK

The *Addams Family* television show aired for two seasons from 1964 to 1966. The influential series, as *Classic Toy Trains* Senior Editor Roger Carp explained in *Lionel Trains of the 1960s* (a special-interest publication released in 2020), was based on the macabre cartoons created by Charles Addams for *The New Yorker* magazine, starting in 1938. Despite its brief time on the air, the original show has inspired several movies, a Broadway musical, and a TV series remake in 1999.



Addams family patriarch Gomez kept an O gauge model railroad in his study. During the shows, he would occasionally stage train wrecks, derailments, and other tragedies on his layout, either to entertain guests or to share quality time with his son, Pugsley. Often his assistant, Thing, would operate the controls while Gomez's wife, Morticia, looked on approvingly.

Roger's research stated that two three-rail layouts were used during filming. A Super O display 5 x 9 feet appeared first and was used for four of the programs during the opening season. A 4 x 8-foot O gauge railroad replaced it about halfway through that first season and was used during the second season.

Interestingly, as Roger discovered, the Super O layout was not one of the standard ones built by the Display Department at Lionel. Instead, it had been built for a different TV series. An episode of *The Twilight Zone*, titled, "The Night of the Meek" and broadcast in December of 1960, had used it.

That unique Super O display is the inspiration for the track plan I've created here. Jerry Plachowski of the Red Lion Train Depot first developed a plan for Super O track, but I was asked to convert his plan to Lionel FasTrack using only

BACK ISSUE RESOURCES

Lionel Trains of the 1960s special issue
"Scrapbox" reader story, January 1995
"Trains on TV" news story, March 1999
"The Addams Family," December 1991

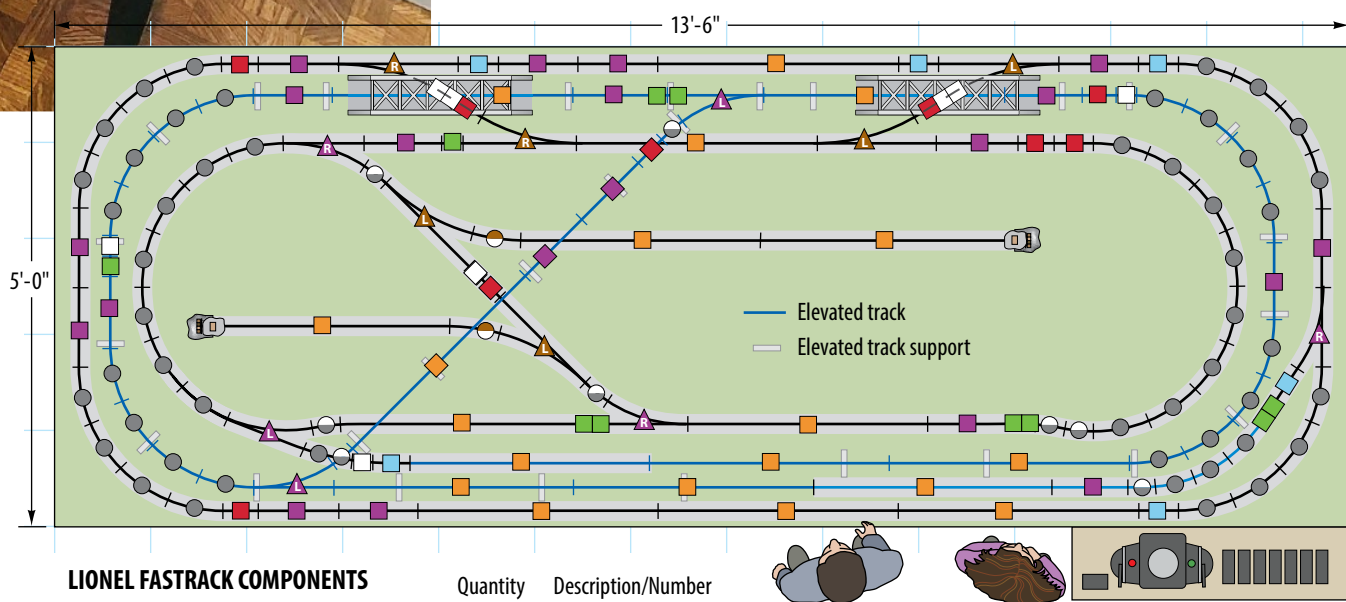
uncut track sections and a minimum of O-36 curvature.

After completing the FasTrack plan, I was asked to enlarge it to dimensions of 5 x 13½ feet. In my original plan, trains could comfortably run on the two loops with a third train waiting its turn on the long connector.

The enlarged plan would allow a fourth train to wait on a passing siding created by the two crossovers and possibly a fifth on the long reversing loop. The 5 x 9-foot ping-pong table allowed for two independent loops and a long elevated crossover line. I included many operating accessories to create a visually active stage for Gomez's weird yet entertaining activities.

The extra space provided just enough room to add another train plus two reverse loops that enabled trains running in either direction to be reversed. The structures, scenery, and operating accessories are limited only by your imagination. **CTT**

The author's track plan measures 5 x 13½ feet, compared to the original 4 x 8 Super O display, and features Lionel FasTrack.



LIONEL FASTRACK COMPONENTS

Quantity	Description/Number
8	□ 1.375-inch straight (12073)
10	■ 1.75-inch straight (12026)
9	■ 4.5-inch straight (12025)
6	■ 5-inch straight (12024)
20	■ 10-inch s traight (12014)

Quantity	Description/Number
19	■ 30-inch straight (12042)
8	○ 0-36 curve, 11.25-degree (12023)
51	○ 0-36 curve, 22.5-degree (12022)
2	○ 0-48 curve, 15-degree (16834)
3	▲ 0-36 left-hand remote switch (12045)
3	▲ 0-36 right-hand remote switch (12046)

Quantity	Description/Number
4	▲ 0-48 left-hand TMCctrack switch (16830)
2	▲ 0-48 right-hand remote switch (12066)
2	■ earthen bumper (12059)

illustration by Kellie Jaeger



The prize was a Lionel No. SR47 display

AN AMERICAN FLYER COLLECTOR BRINGS HOME A LIONEL LAYOUT FROM 1947

STORY AND PHOTOS BY RICHARD L. TROTTER

I'm a die-hard postwar American Flyer collector, and the thought of owning or operating a Lionel train usually sent chills up my spine. But every so often, something comes along that transcends the rivalry between the letters "S" and "O" and reminds me of my love for toy trains no matter how many rails they run on. One of these moments recently occurred.

A friend had approached me about some trains an acquaintance wished to sell. The owner then sent me some pictures, and what I saw there wasn't a box

filled with Lionel trains but a complete Lionel display layout that had been obtained from the Sears, Roebuck & Co. outlet in Pueblo, Colo., back during the

holiday season of 1947. Everything — and I mean everything — had been with the owner since then.

Perhaps the most amazing part of the story was that the owner is a woman, one who has loved the trains since her childhood almost 80 years before. Learning about how they became hers and remembering how excited my two granddaughters are when I run trains for them leaves no doubt in my mind that toy trains thrill everyone, male and female.

The Lionel No. SR47 5 x 5-foot display, sold mainly to Sears, Roebuck & Co. outlets, used four of the top accessories cataloged for 1947: Nos. 45 Automatic Gateman, 97 Coal Elevator, 156 Station Platform, and 164 Log Loader.



Kathy McCulloch, who won the SR47 and an O-27 steam freight set in a raffle held by the Sears store in Pueblo, Colo., kept the display and its accessories as well as the train in her family for almost 80 years until she sold it to *Classic Toy Trains* author Richard L. Trotter.

RAFFLE PRIZE

Kathy McCulloch, the owner of the Lionel display, opens her story by recalling how in 1947 her parents went to the Sears store in downtown Pueblo to buy a new refrigerator. After making the purchase, they received tickets for a raffle to be held after Christmas. The grand prize was a Lionel electric train on display at the store.

"My father," Kathy recalled, "filled out the tickets in my name and returned the stubs to Sears for the drawing. When the time was announced for the drawing, Dad and I went to the store in anticipation."

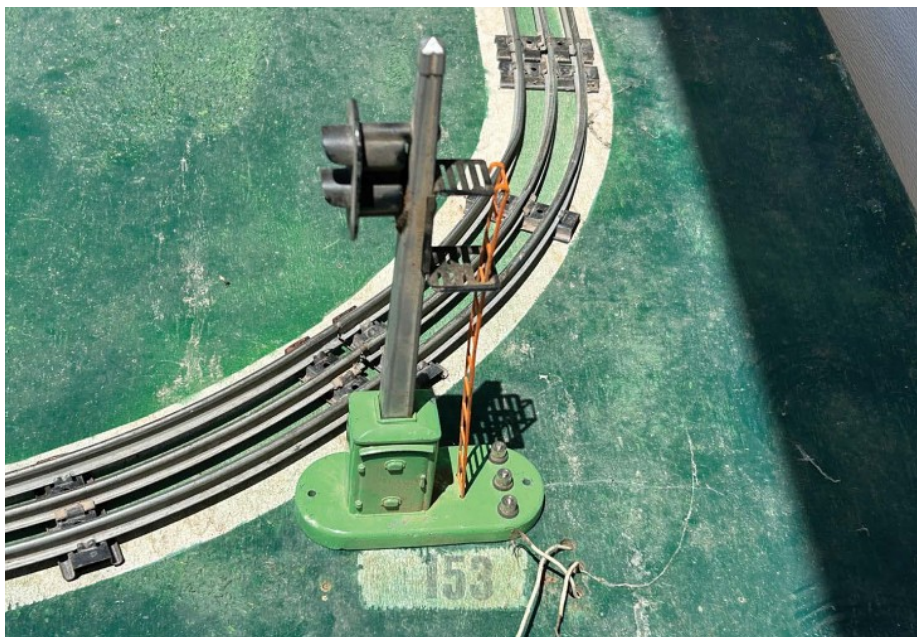
"I was the only girl waiting for the drawing. All the boys and I stood around the platform the layout was on, watching the train go around the track and seeing the automatic gateman wave his lantern."

"I was really excited when the time came for the drawing and stood there amazed when the number with my name was called. I heard the boys say, 'Oh no, a girl won!'"

"I could hardly wait for the people from Sears to deliver the layout to our home. When it arrived my dad and I put it



The Sears store stood out in this photo of downtown Pueblo, Colo., taken in the 1950s, when its population was about 64,000. Photo courtesy Pueblo County Historical Society



Members of the Display Department at Lionel marked the location of each of the operating accessories installed on the SR47 dealer display layout. More than 300 were made.



A Type-R 110-Watt Trainmaster Transformer provided enough power to operate a train and the various accessories on the SR47, including two freight loaders and a gateman.

in front of the Christmas tree and played with it for hours. Later, I had some of the kids in the neighborhood to run it.

"My parents put it away until next Christmas. After we set it up, my little brother, Teddy, who was almost two years old, tried to catch the train going around the track and fell on it, breaking the [No. 156] passenger stand. I was upset and cried that he had broken it. Dad came to the rescue and fixed it as best he could.

"After I married and had children, we would put out the layout for our family to enjoy. Two of my sons tried to fix the wiring, but they never finished the job. So, we weren't able to enjoy the train again."

TRAINS AND ACCESSORIES

When I arrived at Kathy's house to examine the layout, she had put the trains and accessories on a table. They had been in a cardboard moving box containing a news-

paper from 1990. The trains had seen a lot of use, and many of them had broken or missing parts.

An experienced collector might have dismissed the accessories, but I learned that each item had its own story. There was the 156 platform with a triangular piece broken from the roof by Kathy's brother and glued back by her dad.

The No. 97 Coal Elevator was missing its red metal roof. However, because the layout didn't come with any artificial coal, Kathy and her brother would put little rocks and candy in the conveyor to be dumped into a waiting No. 2452 Pennsylvania RR gondola.

The Type-R dual-control transformer with the paint nearly worn off around the right-hand throttle told the story of heavy use by the kids and their dad. And a bag filled with broken control buttons and deteriorating rubber-coated wires explained why a couple of Kathy's sons had tried unsuccessfully to restore and rewire the display layout.

SURVIVING LAYOUT

Kathy's husband, Ron, took me to their garage, where we found the layout tucked up against a wall behind a ladder and a pair of rakes. We carefully moved the display so I could examine the surface.

The 5 x 5-foot layout was constructed with 3/8-inch-thick plywood mounted on a 1 x 2-inch board frame. Much of the original painted sawdust had fallen off, and the surface of the layout had been spray-painted a new shade of green.

The white roads and accessory locations had been masked off only on their edges, which was why overspray covered the center of the roads and could be seen underneath the rails. Fortunately, the product numbers added by Lionel to locate the accessories were still visible. The track was bent in a couple of places, but it was otherwise intact. And the white wires, mounted under the layout, looked sufficient enough to get the job done.

I spent a good portion of the afternoon visiting with Kathy and Ron and listening to their stories of growing up in Pueblo, my hometown, during the 1940s and '50s. Then, with a hearty thank-you and a pleasant goodbye, this die-hard American Flyer collector left the McCullochs with a Lionel SR47 factory display and a promise to get the layout running once more and to share this story of a lady who has always loved trains. **CTT**

Story behind Lionel's earliest postwar display layout

THE NO. SR47 LAUNCHED A NOTEWORTHY TREND

STORY BY ROGER CARP

Richard L. Trotter has shared a wonderful story of a newly discovered example of the No. SR47, the earliest known dealer display layout built by Lionel after World War II. And his timing couldn't be better. What Richard learned from the original owner, almost 80 years after she won the layout in a raffle held by the Sears, Roebuck & Co. store in Pueblo, Colo., beautifully complements the description of the display in an upcoming book.

The layouts Lionel offered its authorized dealers during the postwar era have never lost their appeal. This is why many hobbyists eagerly await the release of *Authoritative Guide to Lionel Postwar Displays* from Project Roar Publishing.

Author Bob Horton has, over the past 30 years, established himself as an expert on the history of displays, along with how to restore, wire, and operate them.

Following an introductory section about the history of displays at Lionel during the prewar and postwar periods, the book includes entries filled with photos and original documents for every dealer display cataloged between 1947 and '66, including the SR47.

According to Horton, Lionel offered the 5 x 5-foot O gauge layout mainly to Sears stores, although Lionel dealers and retailers could buy an SR47 for \$83 (\$1,202 in today's dollars). He reports that 308 examples of the display were constructed.

The Display Department at Lionel's factory in Hillside, N.J., designed the SR47 to be ready to operate, with track, accessories, controllers, and transformer installed and wired. The wood



This pristine example of an SR47 Sears dealer display layout was one of the highlights in the respected collection of Lionel prewar and postwar trains belonging to Mark Stephens.

base came painted cream.

The surface had white-painted roadbed and green areas finished with artificial grass. The loop of O gauge track and its inner line could accommodate one train, which the dealer buying the display could choose.

The SR47 from the Sears retail outlet in downtown Pueblo came with an O-27 outfit cataloged for 1947. The No. 1435WS was headed by a No. 2025 steam locomotive with a smoke unit and headlight; its No. 2466WX

tender had a whistle.

The set had two freight cars (Nos. 2452X Pennsylvania RR Gondola and 2454 Baby Ruth Boxcar) plus a cabooses. The consumer catalog for 1947 specified a No. 2457 Pennsylvania RR illuminated tinplate cabooses, but examples of the 1435WS have never been reported with a 2457 cabooses. Instead, they have been found with the No. 2472 model without a light or one of the Southern Pacific-type cabooses making their debut in

1947 — either a No. 2257 (non-illuminated type) or a No. 2357 (illuminated type)

Curiously, when a 2357 was included with the train, as was true with the SR47 from the Sears retailer in Pueblo, it tended to be the scarce variation painted red and having a matching plastic smokestack. The presence of a highly desirable cabooses in so mundane and inexpensive a O-27 outfit concludes the story on a fascinating note. **CTT**

Create the most entertaining INDUSTRIAL SIDING

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PETER H. RIDDLE

GUARANTEEING OPERATING FUN FOR
YOUNGSTERS — OR THE YOUNG AT



1 Add a dedicated siding to your O gauge layout to allow kids — or kids at heart — to have fun while you run trains on the main line.

Whenever children visit my O gauge layout, the operating accessories capture their attention more than any other feature of the model railroad. To accommodate them, I locate the controls for these toys nearby in the molding around the edge of the table rather than on a central control panel.

I have several industrial sidings, all of them located close to viewers. Each siding is dedicated to a particular freight train, with the cars arranged in a predetermined order to bring them in line with their related accessories when the locomotive backs them onto the siding.

When a visitor arrives, I spot one of these trains onto a siding and shut it down. Then I invite my guest to operate

the accessories while the freight train is stationary. Now I can run other trains without interference or having to move the dedicated train to align it with any of the operating accessories.

PICK YOUR ROSTER

Begin by selecting the cars you want in the train and place them in your preferred order. In this example I've chosen a Canadian National diesel switcher, a Lionel operating log car, an Atlas O tank car, a Lionel coal dump car, a Lionel Bosco milk delivery car, a Lionel gondola, and at the end a caboose.

Back the train onto the siding. Put a bumper at the end of the siding so the train always stops at the same spot when the rear coupler of the caboose touches the

bumper. Now line up the accessories next to the cars they service. I have a Lionel reproduction of an American Flyer log loader, an MTH fueling station, an MTH reproduction of an American Flyer coaling station, a K-Line milk car platform, and a Lionel oil drum loader (a reproduction of a postwar Flyer toy).

With the train on the siding (**Photos 1 and 2**), the log car can receive logs from the loader and prepare to dump its load. You must, of course, include an operating track section here to make the car work. (You need a similar track section for any other operating car with pickup shoes on the underside.)

Photo 1 shows the oil filler pipe on the MTH fueling station in the raised position. **Photo 2** has the pipe lowered to the



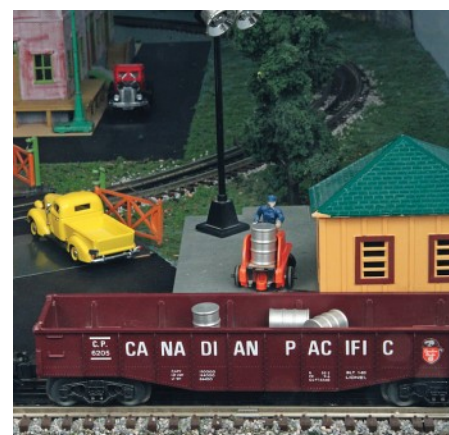
2 By adding a bumper to the end of the siding, you can ensure perfect alignment with the related accessories, in this case the American Flyer log loader and the MTH fueling station.



3 The MTH/American Flyer coal loader provides hours of reliable fun. It does not need an operating track section to work.



4 You may want to hook an animated refrigerator car to a variable-voltage transformer circuit to ensure smooth and reliable operation.



5 The oil drum loader can deliver drums into a waiting gondola.

dome on the tank car. It can be a bit tricky to line up a tank car for the filler pipe to meet the dome. By backing up the train to the bumper at the end of the siding, you can ensure perfect alignment every time. (Purists will no doubt complain that I'm loading oil into a propane tank car.)

Next is the MTH/American Flyer coal loader (**Photo 3**). This is among the most reliable accessories produced in recent years, and the action is fascinating. The scoop descends slowly to pick up its load, and the jaws of the scoop close to hold the coal securely as it rises to the top and then moves laterally into the tower. When you release the button, the coal drops into a bin. Another button dumps the coal into a waiting ore car. You don't need an operating track section here.

The Bosco operating refrigerator car is just one variety of many Lionel milk cars sold during the postwar and modern eras (**Photo 4**). They all contain a scale-sized delivery man, who deposits milk cans on a platform at the touch of a button.

K-Line's milk car platform is somewhat more realistic than the familiar metal version that came with the Lionel cars. It is also the same height and therefore can be used with any Lionel or K-Line product.

You'll need an operating track section for the Bosco milk car. I recommend wiring it to a variable-voltage transformer circuit, such as post B or C on a Lionel Type-ZW or to the throttle post on a separate transformer used just for accessories.

These milk cars are especially sensitive to the amount of voltage available. Give

them too little juice, and the mechanism will buzz but the door won't open. Too many volts will make the delivery man too energetic, and he'll fling the cans way across the platform. A variable-voltage circuit allows an optimum adjustment for smooth and upright deposit of the cans.

Last is an oil drum loader (**Photo 5**), whose driver travels back and forth from the storage rack to trackside, where he dumps the drums into an available gondola. This accessory isn't as sensitive as the Bosco car, so it's not essential to wire it to a variable-voltage circuit.

With a freight train made up to align with all the accessories next to a siding, you can let the kids play to their heart's content and never worry about cargo being spilled on the tracks. **CTT**

How to repair faulty Industrial Rail couplers

TRY ONE OF THESE METHODS

Q Many years ago, I purchased an O gauge Industrial Rail No. 5003 gondola. It's a good-looking freight car, but it sometimes uncouples from the rest of its train, usually when rounding a curve but sometimes when it goes over a switch. Do you know if there is a way to repair it?
— Stephen Greene

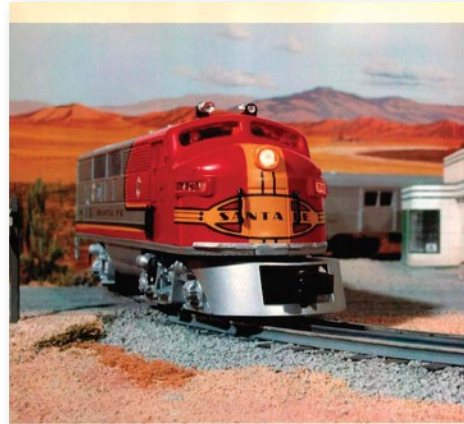
A Industrial Rail was started by United Model Distributors (UMD) in 1998 and produced a broad range of affordable, traditionally sized O-27 freight cars. The models were made well and featured excellent paint and graphics. Unfortunately, the company lasted only a few years. Production ceased around 2003 or 2004; Atlas purchased the line in 2006.

Industrial Rail cars use a variant of Lionel's magnetic disc coupler design, which first appeared in 1957. The knuckle is held in the closed position by an upward-facing pin on the end of a thin steel armature plate. The plate also has a downward-facing metal disc resembling a large thumbtack. When an electro-magnet in the track is activated, it pulls the armature plate downward, withdrawing the knuckle pin and allowing the knuckle to open. A small tab on the armature plate allows manual uncoupling with the touch of a finger.

It's simple and foolproof ... most of the time. The armature on Industrial Rail cars is secured by a spring-loaded screw. Tightening this may reduce incidents of trains coming apart at high speeds, but don't overdo it – stripping this screw will make a minor problem much worse. Alternately, you can disassemble the coupler mechanism and use a pair of needle-nose pliers to very slightly bend the armature plate upward.

This same technique works on many (but not all) magnetic disc couplers made by different manufacturers over the years.

In 1998, the CTT staff had its own issues with unexpected coupler openings on a train of Industrial Rail cars used on the magazine's North Pole & South West-



Easy steps to a realistic railroad
CTT builds a desert layout

78 CLASSIC TOY TRAINS • MAY 1999



The toy train hobby is easier to demonstrate than explain, so the CTT staff built the North Pole & South Western layout and took it on a whirlwind tour of train shows last fall and winter. Thanks to our rising playwood ambassador, tens of thousands of show attendees were exposed to the toy train side of model railroading.

The NP&SW is a railroad with two distinct personalities. The whimsical 4 x 8-foot North Pole city celebrates trains as toys, while the more realistic South Western area salutes the hi rail side of our hobby. The different themes work well as a display piece, but it is probably too quirky for a home layout. So instead of explaining how to replicate the NP&SW, we thought it would be more useful to pass along the layout building lessons that it taught us.

On the following pages, we will show how we created a convincing desert scene. The December 1999 issue, appropriately enough, will detail the construction of CTT's polar metropolis, featuring Marx Trains and Department 56 ceramic buildings.

by Carl Swanson
Photos by Ben Forbes and Carl Swanson



MAY 1999 • CLASSIC TOY TRAINS 79

Industrial Rail couplers would uncouple in one of the tunnels on the O gauge North Pole & South Western, a project layout built by the editors of *Classic Toy Trains* back in 1999. Carl Swanson resorted to using wire to secure the couplers together.

ern project layout. The NP&SW featured a double-deck design. A 4 x 8-foot North Pole city on the top deck gave a nod to the idea of trains as imaginative playthings. The lower deck featured a more realistic Southwest scene. We used Marx tinplate trains for the North Pole. Industrial Rail rolling stock handled duties on the desert scene.

The desert scene looked simple, but it had a nifty hidden trick. A fast-moving train would emerge from a tunnel, careen around a 180-degree single-track curve on the desert, and vanish into a second tunnel. Every third lap, just as one train disappeared clockwise into a tunnel, a second train burst from the same portal, streaking along counterclockwise on the same single track. It depended on a hidden siding under North Pole city and a Depotronics Watchman Micro I circuit board to automatically alternate trains' (every three laps in this case) by turning power on and off to the appropriate sidings. A little bit of toy train magic that never failed to wow train show attendees.

Before disassembling the layout for transportation to its train show debut, we

ran everything at full blast — partly because the layout needed a good long test and mostly because it beat going back to our desks and working. After about a dozen laps, a train hurtled into the tunnel, the second train's locomotive burst forth — with no train in tow!

This problem kept happening. The violent acceleration required by our slight-of-hand periodically popped open the Industrial Rail couplers. A fix was in order. I could have gently tightened the armature screws, or I could delicately bend the plates upward. What I actually did was wrap a couple of turns of solid-core 18-gauge copper wire over each and every coupler in the train and tighten the wire until the armature was crushed into the coupler shank and definitely not going anywhere. Then I smeared the copper wire with a black paint marker. Viola!

In retrospect, I should have run over to the local home-improvement store and bought a packet of its thinnest, smallest, black-colored electrical zip ties. These could have been snugged up to prevent coupler opening and snipped off to return the coupler to its original configuration.

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What I did wasn't a repair at all. But it worked flawlessly, train show after train show and – because I salvaged the cars when the layout was eventually dismantled – they still run perfectly well to this day, provided you don't mind lifting the cars to uncouple them!

ADDITIONAL READING

- The construction of the desert section of the North Pole & South Western was profiled in “Easy desert layout tips” in the May 1999 issue.

- The North Pole scene, featuring Marx Trains and Department 56 buildings, appeared in “Planning CTT’s holiday layout” in the December 1999 issue.

- Ray L. Plummer’s comprehensive guide to the history and repair of postwar and modern knuckle couplers can be found in the February 1998 CTT.

Smoke over the Hudson

Q Around the year 2000, I bought an O gauge Lionel No. 18082 New York Central 4-6-4 steam locomotive. It never smoked much if at all. I finally opened it up and found wires interfering with the smoke plunger. I tried to move the wire with some success, but the smoke unit never worked that well. Sometimes it would smoke if the power was cranked up, which wouldn't help because then the locomotive would be moving too fast. Is there a way to upgrade the smoke unit? — *Joe Murphy*

A Lionel released a stable of steam locomotives in the late 1990s that combined good looks, solid operation, and, often, anemic smoke units. The unit requires periodic doses of Lionel (or compatible) smoke fluid to function; four to eight drops of fluid in the stack is all that are needed. More fluid is definitely not better, but it's just as important not to let it run dry. The smoke unit's heating element or its fiberglass wick could be damaged if it's operated without fluid.

As I recall, the Hudson doesn't really smoke while stopped and smokes only modestly at speed. Smoke output never seems to reach a point where it's advisable to crack a window in the train room. A heavy train in tow would help with smoke production. If your Hudson's smoke unit



Lionel released this No. 28007 in 1999, the same year as Joe Murphy's No. 18082. CTT photo

went dry at some point in the past quarter-century, replacing the smoke unit might help. It's a bit of a project and one that requires a decent comfort level with disassembly and reassembly. Bottom line: even if it runs like new afterward, it still may not be a noticeably terrific smoker.

I was unable to find an exploded-view parts diagram of this specific locomotive. Talking to a knowledgeable parts supplier (check the ads in *Classic Toy Trains*) is a necessity here.

ADDITIONAL READING

Ray L. Plummer's step-by-step article on repairing Lionel's postwar smoke units can be found online by visiting <https://www.trains.com/ctt/how-to/restoration-repair/repairing-lionels-smoke-units/>

Q Does anyone still make smoke pellets that I can use safely in my Lionel No. 736 steam locomotive and tender from back in the 1950s? — *Spencer Arden*

A Original Lionel SP Pellets can still be purchased at toy train and online auctions and larger toy train shows. Reproductions are available from dealers. You can visit Brasseur Electric Train Repair at brasseurelectrictainrepair.com to order reproduction pellets.

Trestles for Lionel drawbridge

Q I picked up a Lionel No. 2317 Operating Drawbridge at a local train show. Unfortunately, six of the trestles were missing. What are the sizes of these trestles? — *Louis Leppert*

A You need the three shortest piers in any Lionel Graduated Trestle Set. Specifically, they are “I,” “J,” and “K.” Of course, you'll need two of each.

Adding insulated track sections

Q Is there a way to use insulated track sections to directly control crossing gates and different signals but with fixed voltage so they aren't reliant on the track voltage? I've found that my Lionel Cab1 remote-control base and 180-watt PowerMaster don't interfere with insulated track sections! — *James Huff*

A If you want constant voltage going to accessories controlled by insulated rails, it's best to use a single transformer for both. That way the ground path is easier to keep straight. Your transformer should have either fixed-voltage binding posts (Lionel Nos. 1033 and 1044 and Types KW, RW, and TW are a few) or variable-voltage posts (Lionel Types V, VW, Z, and ZW).

Wire the U, or Common, post to the outside rail and whatever you're using for the train control to the center rail. Attach the fixed-voltage post to one of your accessory wire clips and the other clip to the control rail of the insulated section.

Lionel KW/ZW Diode clarification

In the Summer 2026 issue, page 53, you posted my discovery of a diode orientation error in the *Lionel Service Manual* schematic for KW and ZW transformers. One key detail was missing.

The NTE5944 I used is a “cathode to case” diode. You may find it easier to use an “anode to case” diode, such as the NTE5991. The mounting of an anode to case diode will adapt easier to the existing structure of the transformer.

Because I used a cathode to case diode, I was forced to go through a mounting “maze” to obtain the proper diode orientation. — *Jim Moritz CTT*

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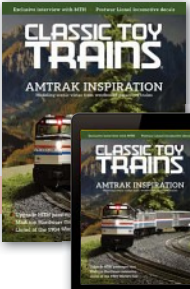
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Three brothers and American Flyer trains

MEMORIES OF AN S GAUGE BOYHOOD

STORY BY JIM KOTTKAMP

I've had a love affair with railroads my entire life! It began for my two older brothers and me in Kirkwood, Mo., a suburb of St. Louis, where we grew up. After church on Sunday, our father would park the car next to the Missouri Pacific RR tracks. The show was on! Kirkwood was on the crest of a hill, and we watched westbound and eastbound trains.

Then in 1952, when I was five years old, my brother Bill was seven, and my brother Bob was nine, Dad purchased several American Flyer S gauge trains from a local hobby shop. He picked Flyer because it was more realistic — operating on two rails instead of three.

There was a room in the basement of

our family home that was perfect for a train layout. The pitch to my frugal mother was that the model trains would provide wonderful opportunities for the three of us to learn about electricity, construction, and teamwork. My brothers and I were excited about the layout, which we saw as a real running railroad.

RAILROAD EMPIRE

Dad had bought us a railroad empire! Our steam locomotives included a Royal Blue streamlined 4-6-2 Pacific and a regular Pacific, along with a 4-6-4 Hudson. We had only one diesel, but it was a beauty. Yes, I'm talking about Santa Fe Alco A and B units in the famous warbonnet paint scheme, along with a full passenger train.

When it came to freight cars, our roster consisted of at least one of every type the A.C. Gilbert Co. had in S gauge. Topping it off, there were three illuminated cabooses.

There was no limit to imagination in our basement! Our engine facility had a water tank and Seaboard coaling station



SEASON'S GREETINGS



The Kottkamps

Besides S gauge trains, the Kottkamp brothers were involved with scouting during their youth. The three of them once posed for a picture their family used for a Christmas card.

for the steamers. The long main line with electric switches for the passing sidings enabled us to run three trains at a time.

An elevated main line passed through mountains made out of papier-mâché and had girder bridges to pass over level tracks. Trains could stop at two passenger stations. One was a classic “talking station,” with a voice calling out “All aboard!” The other had an extended passenger platform filled with passengers waiting to board on their journey.

Dad had constructed a realistic town with houses, stores, a fire station, a city hall, and a church — all built out of cardboard. Commercial miniature streetlights lined the avenues. The two principal streets featured railroad grade crossings with flashing lights.

An American Flyer logging accessory allowed my brothers and me to use a crane to load and remove timber. The cattle accessory supplied cattle for the town or loaded them on a stockcar for delivery elsewhere. An added bit of realism was the rotary beacon whose green and red lights stood out when we had “night running.”

Dual railroad crossings mandated safe control of trains to avoid collisions. My brothers and I spent hundreds of hours, not playing trains, but in our minds running a real railroad.

STILL STRONG

My brothers and I maintained interest in the S gauge railroad until Bob and Bill entered junior high school. I, however, never lost my fascination with full-size

trains and model railroading. Just the opposite, as I continued building layouts in many other scales.

Along the way, I have made any number of wonderful friends, some of whom served as mentors to guide me with my modeling. I think especially of Bill Clouser, who had a world-class interurban layout and build models for the Smithsonian Institution, yet he was always willing to share advice and insights with me and other hobbyists he knew.

My focus these days is a garden railway that continues to keep me challenged. It culminates a lifetime of enjoyment with model trains, encouraged by my parents and shared with my two brothers as we grew up and discovered the joys of our American Flyer trains. **CTT**

Lionel Legacy 0-8-0 steam locomotive



The 0-8-0 was a United States Railway Administration (USRA) designated class locomotive developed during World War I. The USRA 0-8-0 was built as a heavy, low-speed switcher, for use in a variety of settings from hump yards to large industrial settings. The 0-8-0 also had decent traction power to run short mainline freight.

Production began in 1918, and by 1920 175 units had been built for more than 20 railroads. After the end of the war, 1,000 more 0-8-0 locomotives were built.

Even after the USRA was dissolved, the 0-8-0 continued production, with approximately 2,800 total units built overall. There's one remaining USRA variation of the 0-8-0, Republic Steel Corp. No. 285, currently at the Kentucky Railroad Museum in New Haven, Ky. Other non-USRA units survived as well.

OUT OF THE BOX

With an overall length of just over 18 inches, this Lionel model is slightly oversized for 1:48 scale by approximately about 1½". This model navigates O-31 curves, so it can run on the smallest layouts. It includes a number of features, such as a fan-driven smoke unit, whistle steam, and even a swinging bell.

The engine features a tethered drawbar. By tethering the tender and the locomotive, the model has a greater electrical footprint on the track, preventing it from losing power if it were to pass over a dead section of rail. By tethering the tender and engine, the engineers at Lionel are also able to place the computer boards in the tender, freeing space in the boiler for the smoking whistle and swinging bell mechanics.

This model can be run conventionally, with a TMCC remote, Legacy Remote, Cab3

app, or Bluetooth. Since it is a switching engine, Lionel has outfitted it with a front and rear ElectroCoupler.

Programming controls are located under the removable coal load. While this locomotive comes with standard sounds, including a variation of bells and whistles, it's the amount of features Lionel has packed into a small frame that makes it one of the best models for the money.

Lionel cataloged six 0-8-0 variations in its catalog, including M-K-T (No.

2631200), New York Central (No. 2631210), Republic Steel (No. 2631220), Rutland (No. 2631230), Southern Ry. (No. 2631240), and Aliquippa & Southern (No. 2631250).

The model featured in this review is a custom run by the Metropolitan Division of the Train Collectors Association (No. 2631680), still available on their website as of July 2026. — *Chris Montagna*

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

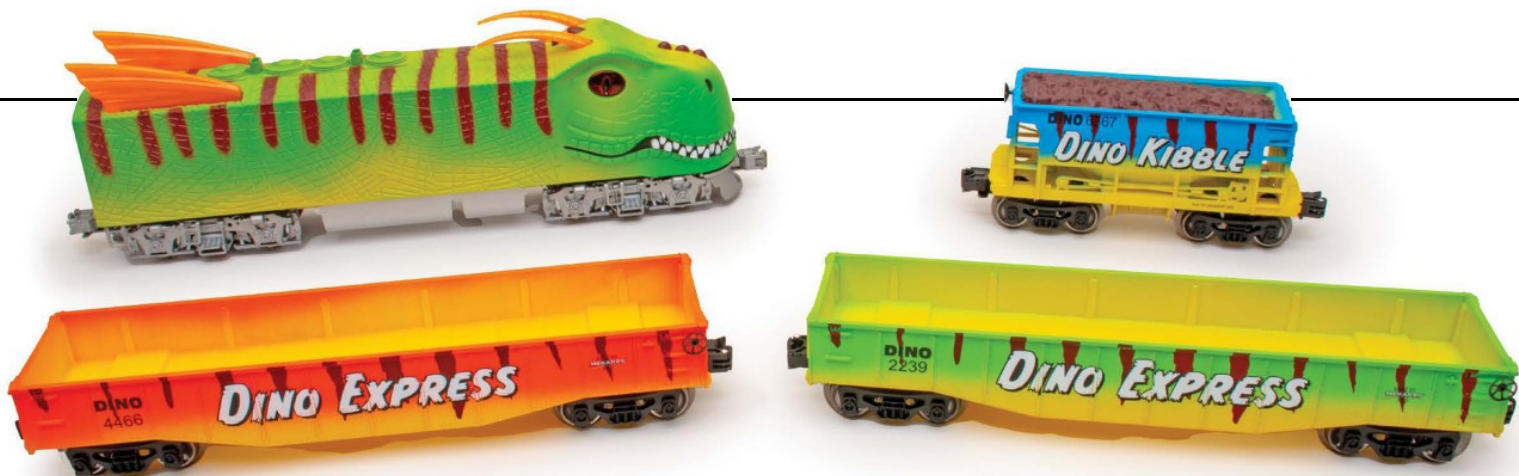
LIONEL LEGACY 0-8-0 STEAM LOCOMOTIVE (NO. 2631680)

Features: TMCC, Legacy, or conventional control; Bluetooth control; whistle steam; O-31 operation; swinging bell; control switches under coal load

Road names: Aliquippa & Southern, M-K-T, Nickel Plate Road, New York Central, Republic Steel, Rutland, Southern Ry.

MSRP: \$999.99

Website: lionel.com



Menards Dino Express Train Set

The Dino Express, an O gauge 34-piece train set from Menards, offers fun, sound, laughs, and roars for every person who enjoys electric trains. No matter what your age or experience in the hobby, you'll love it.

How can I be so sure? Because I just finished a week with my two grandsons, ages 7 and 5, and we played with the Dino Express every day. I watched as they easily grasped how to run the locomotive using a battery-powered handheld controller and then proceeded to put the train through all its motions.

DIVERSE CONTENTS

The cardboard box features exciting illustrations of the contents as well as text describing what's packed inside and how everything should be used. The train, curved and straight O gauge

track, battery-powered controller (requires three AAA batteries, not included), battery-powered speeder (requires one AA battery, not included), and box with 15 colorful dinosaur figurines fill the Styrofoam liner.

Let's start with the four-piece train. The 13-inch-long locomotive has the chassis of a diesel but the body shell of a carnivore from the Jurassic Age. The mouth boasts sharp teeth. The piercing eyes have red light-emitting diodes. Orange lights illuminate the horns and spines on the beast. The effect is fantastic, especially in the dark.

There are two dinosaur-oriented gondolas and a hopper topped with a plastic load labeled "Dino Kibble." Everything went together in a snap, and my grandsons quickly assembled the train and put it on the track.



Cody Grivno photos

MENARDS DINO EXPRESS TRAIN SET (NO. 2759498)

Features: diesel locomotive; two gondolas; one hopper car; 15 toy dinosaurs; chaser vehicle (not shown); tubular track; remote control; 18-volt wall wart power supply

MSRP: \$299.99

Website: menards.com/trains

The sections of Menards O gauge tubular track form an oval that measures 36 x 56 inches. Only with a few of the pieces did I need to use a scratch awl to widen the holes so the track fit together to provide a smooth fit. Track is compatible with Lionel and K-Line tubular and MTH RealTrax, but needs transition sections for Lionel FasTrack.

OPERATION

Handling the Dino Express is so simple, even a caveman can do it! You just plug in the wire leading from a special straight section and flick the switch on the side of the controller. Red lights burst forth, and the locomotive is ready to spring.

Turning the lever on the throttle to the right makes the big green monster move forward. Shifting the lever back to the center and then to the left shifts it into reverse. The controller is programmed so the speed of the train never exceeds what is necessary to

keep the Dino Express on the metal three-rail tracks — much to the dismay of my two little speed demons!

Also on the controller are three buttons that multiply the fun of the set. Press one, and the locomotive emits a loud and terrifying roar. Press another, and you hear the most ominous music possible.

Finally — and the favorite of every middle-aged father plus doting grandfathers like me — is the button labeled "Jokes." Pressing it once brings the start of a riddle: "What do you call someone who puts their right hand in the mouth of a T-Rex?" Wait a bit and press it again to get the groaner of an answer, "Lefty!"

FURTHER EVOLUTION

The Dino Express capitalizes on the passion kids feel about dinosaurs to motivate an interest in toy trains. Menards should build on the Dino Express with accessories and operating cars. — Roger Carp

Lionel Statue of Liberty Illuminated Boxcar



Cody Grivno photos



The United States of America celebrated its Semiquincentennial on July 4, 2026. I was delighted that Lionel sent CTT for review a sample of the Statue of Liberty Illuminated Boxcar, a product from its America 250 line.

OUT OF THE BOX

The boxcar is Lionel's standard issue, which I've covered in detail before (see the Disney D23 boxcar review online.) The car weighs 14.4 oz, about 2 oz. more than a plain boxcar. Underneath,

you'll find an on/off switch for the lighting.

The graphics show the Statue of Liberty with New York City skyscrapers in the distance. The door has the first few lines of the sonnet "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus, the poem etched into a brass plaque at the base of the statue. The right side shows a closeup of Lady Liberty with her torch. The roof and ends are red plastic.

ON THE TRACK

While this is an attractive boxcar on its own, the magic hap-

pens when you apply power to the track. Quoting Lionel Product Manager Cody Harwell from an interview I conducted, "There's a hidden panel in the boxcar that is backlit. This allows only the areas that we specify to illuminate." Sure enough, the statue's torch and headpiece light up on both sides of the boxcar! Very cool! Toy train technology has sure come a long way.

I realize I'm being very nit-picky here, but I wish the lighting appeared on the entire side panel, perhaps a tiny light where the torch is in the backed-off photo, and maybe a starry sky. Perhaps Lionel could add fireworks in the sky too? I'd love to see a second version of this boxcar with these additions.

A small note: you'll notice a slight buzzing sound when

the boxcar is illuminated. It didn't bother me; in fact, it sounded rather nostalgic (a bit like a postwar locomotive buzzing). When you're running a train, you likely won't even notice it.

Like other Lionel boxcars I've reviewed, this one worked great on our in-house Fas-Track layout. It coupled to other pieces of rolling stock without a problem. With a recommended O-27 curve radius for operation, it will work on most layouts.

This boxcar has a nice "wow" factor, especially when the lights are out. If you're building a patriotic train or hosting an event, you'll want to order one of these for your fleet. — *Rene Schweitzer*

STATUE OF LIBERTY ILLUMINATED BOXCAR NO. 2628500

Features: Illumination on both sides; die-cast trucks with operating couplers; O-27 operation

MSRP: \$159.99

Website: lionel.com

Atlas O Premier flatcar with trailers



Cody Grivno photo

Atlas O has released a flatcar with 20-foot trailers as part of the Premier line. You might recognize the tooling; it was once owned by MTH.

Our review sample is product No. 3002598 in 3-rail, Strates Shows No. 26. Strates Shows Inc., based in Orlando, Fla., has a history dating to 1932, when James E. Strates purchased Southern Tier Shows and renamed it James E. Strates Shows. It still operates today.

OUT OF THE BOX

The flatcar has a nice heft to it, weighing 14.8 ounces. With the trailers, the total weight is

1 lb., 6.3 ounces. Assuming this is a 50-foot flatcar, it should measure 12.5" inches in 1:48 scale. The car is oversized at 14 $\frac{5}{8}$ " inches long.

The body of the flatcar is made from injection-molded plastic. On top of the deck, you'll find molded decking with wood-grain detail, four wheel chocks (with a black steel tread plate), and two fifth-wheel hitches. Take care when handling the hitches, as they feel a bit fragile.

The underbody includes cross-ties that fit between the center sills. The air reservoir is part of the casting. You'll also notice a brake cylinder, a control valve, brake rods, and related pipes.

The colorful trailers are nicely done. The paint is crisp and neatly applied, except for a few tiny areas around the clearance lights. They appear to be models of an early Fruehauf trailer from the 1910s-1930s, based on prototype photos I found online. The trailers are approximately 6" long, which is about 1" too long in 1:48 scale.

I couldn't find evidence that the trailers' paint schemes

were based on any prototypes. I reached out to Steve Woodward, a member of Atlas' Research & Development team, and he confirmed this, saying, The [paint scheme] more or less captures the flavor of the designs and colors used on the carnival wagons."

The trailers' underside details caught my eye. The tires, including the spare, are made from rubber. The rubber mudflaps are a nice touch too.

To attach the trailers to the flatcar, line up the hitch on the trailer's front underside with the hole in the fifth-wheel hitch. It's nice that the trailers are removable, should you wish to add a different trailer or remove them to create a scene on your layout.

ON THE TRACK

The Atlas O flatcar performed flawlessly on our in-house lay-

out, which uses Lionel Fas-Track. It navigated curves and turnouts smoothly. The couplers performed well, and overall performance of the car was smooth and even. Atlas O recommends O-31 curves for the best operation.

Atlas offers three versions of this flatcar, each with different trailer designs. In addition, Atlas is taking preorders on their website for an 89'-4" flatcar with Strates Shows trailers (Nos. 3001966 and 3001967), if you wish to build a Strates circus train.

If you like flatcars with trailers, circus trains, colorful paint schemes, or are interested in carnival history, check out these flatcars. — *Rene*

Thanks to Mont Switzer and Cody Grivno for their assistance with terminology and research.

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Schedule of Events

FL, OCALA: Lions Bi-Annual Train Show. First Christian Church, 1908 E. Fort King St., Ocala, FL 34471. Saturday, November 7, 2026, 9:00am-2:00pm. Model trains, accessories, detail parts and toys. Admission \$5.00, children 12 and under free w/paid adult. Bring two canned goods and receive \$1.00 off admission. Food/snacks available. Information: Bob 352-694-6381 or cell 352-547-0938

MI, BELLEVILLE: Rails on Wheels & Division 6-NMRA's North Central Region, presents the Southeast Michigan Model Railroad Show and Sale. November 22, 2026, 10am-3pm. Early Bird 9am. New Location: Wayne County Community College's Ted Scott Campus; 9555 Haggerty Rd., Zip: 48111. Admission: \$6, Early Bird \$10. Operating Layouts, LEGO layout, Vendors, Clinics. Contact: John Young, 517-449-9063, cdjhyoung@yahoo.com

MI, EAST LANSING: Lansing Model Railroad Club Show and Sale. Farm Bureau Michigan State University Pavilion. Sunday, November 8, 2026, 10:00am-4:00pm. Admission \$8.00, 12 and under free. Michigan's largest train show: layouts, demonstrations and 500+ tables. Free parking. Flyer, table forms and map <http://www.lmrc.org> or call John Hartmann 517-290-8948

MN, ST. CLOUD: GRANITE CITY TRAIN SHOW AND SALE. River's Edge Convention Center, 10 4th Ave S, St. Cloud, MN 56301. Saturday, November 14, 2026, 9:00am-3:00pm. \$6.00, Kids 10 and under FREE. Buy/sell model/toy trains, books, videos, railroad collectibles. Operating model and toy train displays. Win a LIONEL train set! 612-558-6484; GraniteCityTrainShow@gmail.com or visit www.GraniteCityTrainShow.com

MO, JOPLIN: Joplin History & Mineral Museum Model Train Show and Swap Meet. Saturday, November 21, 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

MO, ST. LOUIS: 35th Annual Greater St. Louis Metro Area Train Show sponsored by Mississippi Valley N. Scalers. NEW LOCATION Saturday only! Kirkwood Community Center, 111 S. Geyer Road, Kirkwood, MO 63122. Saturday, October 3, 2026, 10am-4pm. Admission: \$10, kids 12 and under FREE! All scales, swap tables, layouts! Free parking. David Johnson, 636-225-2405, <https://mvns.raifan.net>

NC, RALEIGH: Neuse River Valley Model RR Club 42nd ANNUAL FALL TRAIN SHOW; DATES: November 7-8, Sat 9-5; Sun 10-4. Graham Building at NC State Fairgrounds. 500+ vendor tables, 16 operating layouts. Display your models at our Craftsman's Showcase. Admission: \$10 covers both days, children 12 and under free with adult. Visit www.nrvclub.net

NH, DOVER: The Great Northern New England Train Show. Dover Lodge of Elks #184, 282 Durham Road, Dover, NH 03820. Saturday, October 31, 2026, 10:00am-3:00pm. Admission: \$5 per person, children under 12 free. Exhibitor tables \$35, includes entrance fee. All scales, operating layout, railroadiana items, and food on premises. Contact Ed Martin, efmartner@aol.com or 603-362-4300

NJ, BRICK: ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents The Brick Train Show. Elks Lodge, 2491 Hooper Avenue, Brick, NJ 08723. Sunday, November 1, 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, EAST RUTHERFORD: METCA/NYSME All Gauge Train Show. October 10, 2026. St. Joseph's School, 120 Hoboken Road, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. 9am-2pm. METCA/NYSME members admitted free at 8am, public at 9am. Admission: \$5.00 per person 16 and up. Layouts, refreshments, and door prizes. For tables and information, contact the NYSME Office at 201-939-9212 or email: contact@modelengineers.org

NJ, TOMS RIVER: ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents the Toms River Toy & Train Show. Elks Lodge, 600 Washington St., Toms River, NJ 08753. Sunday, October 4, 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 Toms River Show.

NJ, WAYNE: ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents The Wayne Train Show. P.A.L. Hall, 1 Pal Drive, Wayne, NJ 07470. Sunday, September 27, 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.

NJ, WAYNE: ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents The Wayne Train Show. P.A.L. Hall, 1 Pal Drive, Wayne, NJ 07470. Sunday, November 22, 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 Helling 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

OH, COSHOCTON: Inaugural Coshocton Train Show, Coshocton County Career Center, 23640 Airport Rd., Saturday, October 17, 2026. Hours 10am-3pm. 70+ vendor tables starting at \$15/table. All scales. \$5 Admission; kids 12 and under FREE. Food available by donation. FREE Parking. Proceeds benefit Coshocton Model Railroad Club - Open House at 2pm. Info: 330-473-7466; coshoctontrainshow.com - Sponsored by LANSON TRAINS

OH, DAYTON: 50th Original Dayton Train Show. The New Montgomery County Fairgrounds, 645 Infirmary Road, Dayton, OH 45417. November 7 & 8, 2026. Saturday 11am-5pm and Sunday 11am-4pm. Admission: \$10.00 per adult, children 12 and under free with paid adult. PO Box 341233, Beavercreek, OH 45434, 937-424-6413. Email: NMRA.Div.3@gmail.com or visit: www.DaytonTrainShow.com for updates.

OK, GREATER TULSA AREA: Holiday Train Show. December 5, 2026. Saturday 9am-3pm. Admission: \$10/adult, 12 and under free w/paid adult. Rhema Ninowski Recreation Center, 1367 East 71st South, Broken Arrow, OK 74012. Operating Layouts, Door Prizes, Concessions. Kids train set giveaway Saturday between noon and 1pm. Over 100 vendor tables. Presented by Heartland Toy Train Association. www.HeartlandToyTrains.org

PA, ALLENTOWN: ATMA First Frost Train Meet. Allentown Fairgrounds Agri-Plex, 1925 W. Chew Street, Allentown, PA 18104. November 14 & 15, 2026. Saturday 9am-4pm, Sunday 9am-3pm. Advance tickets \$15, admitted at 8am. At the door, admitted 9am: \$10 adults, 12 and under FREE with adult ticket purchase. For more info, visit: www.allentowntrainmeet.com or call 610-442-2859

PA, YORK: The Barry King Memorial Train Show. Reliance Fire Hall, 1341 W. Market St., York, PA 17404. Mon-Wed, October 19-21, 2026. 9am-5pm; Open to the public, free admission. All gauges of trains and vintage toys. 8-ft. tables for all 3 days are \$60 ea. For information contact Todd or Bev Metcalf, 860-432-2124, or email: trainsmore@aol.com

TN, LEBANON: TCA Dixie Division, Music City Chapter, 32nd Annual Christmas Toy Train Show. Saturday, December 12, 2026. 9am-3pm CST. Wilson County Fairgrounds, "Made in Tennessee" Building, 945 East Baddour Parkway, Lebanon, TN 37087. Admission: Adults \$8 (cash only), Children under 13 FREE! Free parking! Sponsored by the Music City Chapter TCA. For information: 615-417-3094 or www.dixiedivisiontca.com

VA, FREDERICKSBURG: Rappahannock Model Railroaders 29th Annual Christmas Model Train Show, December 12-13, 2026. Operating G, O, S, HO, N, Z and LEGO train layouts. Vendors, Santa, train set raffle and kids area. Saturday 9am-5pm. Sunday 10am-4pm. Adults \$10. Youth 13-17 \$5. Under 13 free. Eagles Lodge, 21 Cool Springs Road, Fredericksburg, VA 22405. Info: www.rmrrailroaders.com

WA, LONGVIEW: November 21, 2026. LK&R Model Railroad Club presents our 2026 Holiday Model Train and Toy Swap Meet. Cowitz County Event Center, 1900 7th Ave. 10am-4pm. Admission \$5.00. See <https://www.cowitzeventcenter.com/contact-event-professionals/> and scroll down for directions. Information for vendors and guests, visit: <http://lkrtrainsyolasite.com> or contact Howard Flick. 360-751-7276, email: flickh@yahoo.com

WA, SPOKANE: River City Modelers Fall Train Show. Spokane Fairgrounds, 404 N. Havana. Sunday, October 11th, 9:30am-3:30pm. Admission: \$8 for adults, 12 & under free. 200+ tables of Railroad-related items for sale, operating layouts, Free-MO, Operation Lifesaver & more. Free Parking. For table rental or general info, contact: Shirley Sample, 509-991-2317 or email: shirley@busnws.com

WI, MONROE: Green County Model Railroaders 48th Annual Model Train Show & Swap Meet. The Stateline Ice and Community Expo, 1632 4th Avenue West, Monroe, WI 53566. September 26-27, 2026. Saturday & Sunday, 10am-4pm. For information contact Kevin Johnson, 608-558-9332, or visit: www.gcmrrinc.org

WI, ONALASKA: The 35th Annual Great Tri-State Rail Sale. Onalaska Omni Center, 255 Riders Club Road. Saturday, October 24, 2026. 9:00am-3:00pm. Admission \$8.00, under 12 free with adult. 300 vendor tables. All Scales; Model, Toy & Antique Trains & Memorabilia. Information: 4000 Foundation, PO Box 3411, La Crosse, WI 54602, 608-498-9522. www.4000foundation.org

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

CLOSING DATES:

Winter 2026 closes October 6

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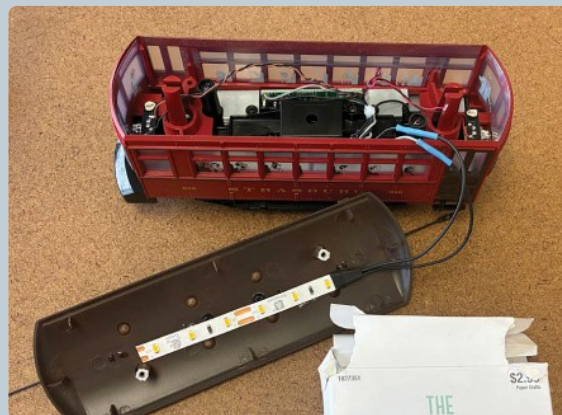
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LED lighting upgrade

Editor Rene Schweitzer loved operating a TCA exclusive Lionel trolley during a recent product review, but she was disappointed with the interior lighting. Learn how Rene upgraded the lighting and concealed the circuit board inside, all for less than \$10!



Collecting and appreciating sets

Sets are the foundation of the toy train hobby, and they have been for more than a century. Learn more about the history of sets and how Senior Editor Roger Carp went on a quest to rebuild his childhood Lionel No. 1561WS steam freight set from 1956.



Locomotives we love

Noted contributor Bill Clark shares his all-time favorite locomotive, the American Flyer No. 312 Pennsylvania RR K5 4-6-2 Pacific. This prized S gauge engine has a place of honor in his train room, but still runs on his layout.

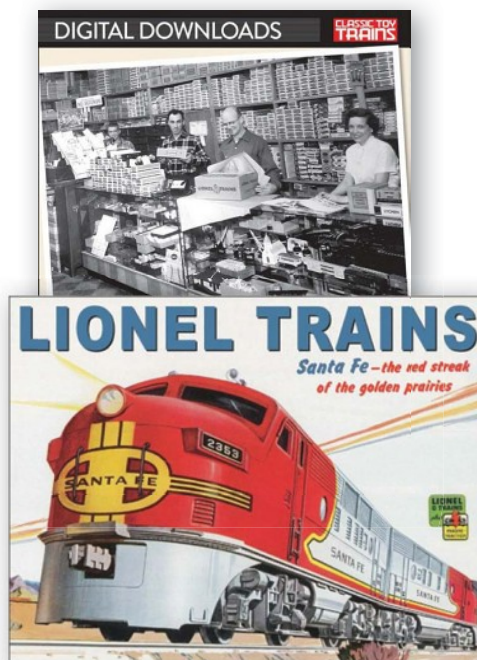
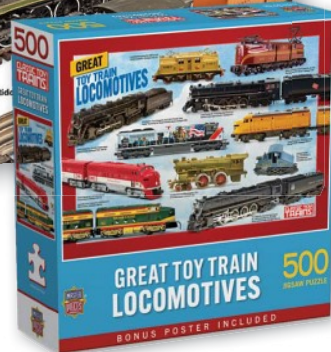
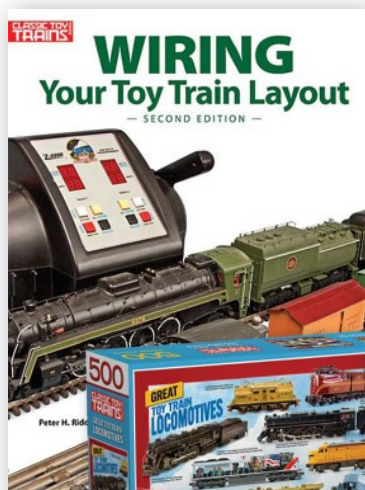


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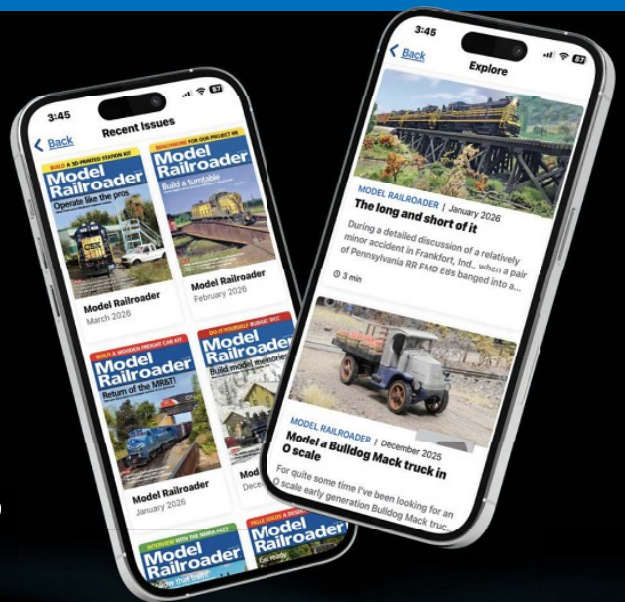
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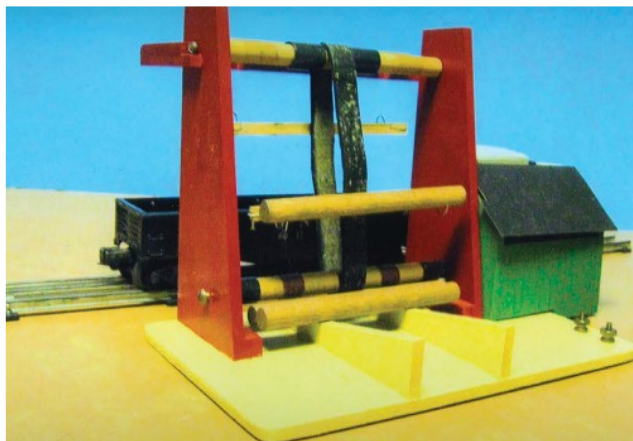
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Inexpensive lighting

I wanted to illuminate my freight dock loading platform and realized I could use an old string of Christmas lights. The original light set uses 3.5-volt bulbs, so I cut out three lights wired in series. Then I changed the bulbs to all amber and hooked up the wire ends to my interior lights in the building, which I usually run at about 10 volts using an old transformer to adjust it (this prolongs the bulb life). I used adhesive tape to hold the short string under the loading dock roof. — *James Martin*



Homemade operating accessories

I've included a lot of Lionel and American Flyer operating accessories on my layout. At a train show, I saw a vendor selling 12-volt DC motors geared down to revolve slowly. I bought some to build my own accessories.

I first built a log loader. It has a rubber belt that revolves around two dowels (upper left photo). One dowel is driven by the geared motor while the other dowel freely rotates. I glued two pieces of wood, spaced 180 degrees apart, to the outside of the rubber belt. Each piece of wood has two metal wires shaped like hooks. As the belt moves, the hooks grab a log, carry it to the top of the loader, and release it. The log rolls down a ramp and into a gondola.

Next, I built a magnetic crane. It uses two geared motors and parts from an Erector Set (lower left photo). One motor rotates the crane 360 degrees; the other motor raises and lowers an electromagnet. I made the electromagnet from a bolt and nut, two washers, and coils of bell (or magnet) wire.

The controller has one set of

switches to control the rotation of the crane and another set to control the motion of the electromagnet. A third switch turns the electromagnet on or off. The electromagnet is AC powered, because I discovered that using DC causes the electromagnet to become permanently magnetized.

I also constructed a gantry crane from two geared motors. One motor and a counterweight move the gantry car back and forth, while the other motor raises and lowers an electromagnet in the gantry car. The controller is similar to the one used with the magnetic crane.

The fourth accessory I built is similar to Flyer's coal loader. It uses a geared motor with a counterweight to raise/lower the bucket and move it over the chute, where it opens and releases coal into a gondola.

A homemade solenoid closes the bucket, and gravity opens it. The controller has a series of switches to control the motion of the bucket and one switch to open or close the bucket. —

Daniel Radman

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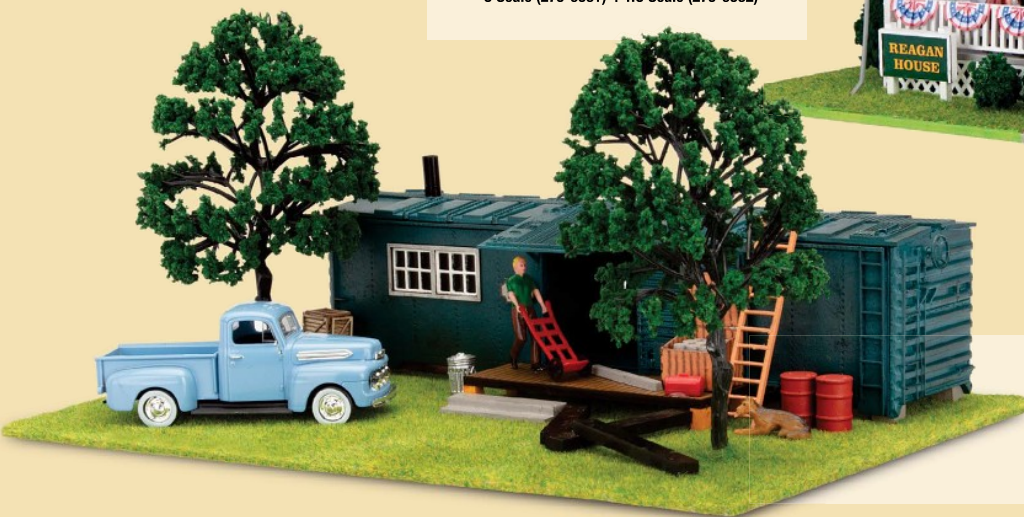
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