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**Lionel
SD70ACe**
In Union Pacific
heritage (+more)
schemes p.50

TIME MACHINE!

Travel to a
modern layout
with plenty
of postwar
influences

p.30

Big bucks!
A beautiful
Voltamp 4-6-2

p.39

Little projects
with big impact
for your layout

p.40

A classic 6464
boxcar with
neat variations

p.36



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Vol. 36 • Issue 5

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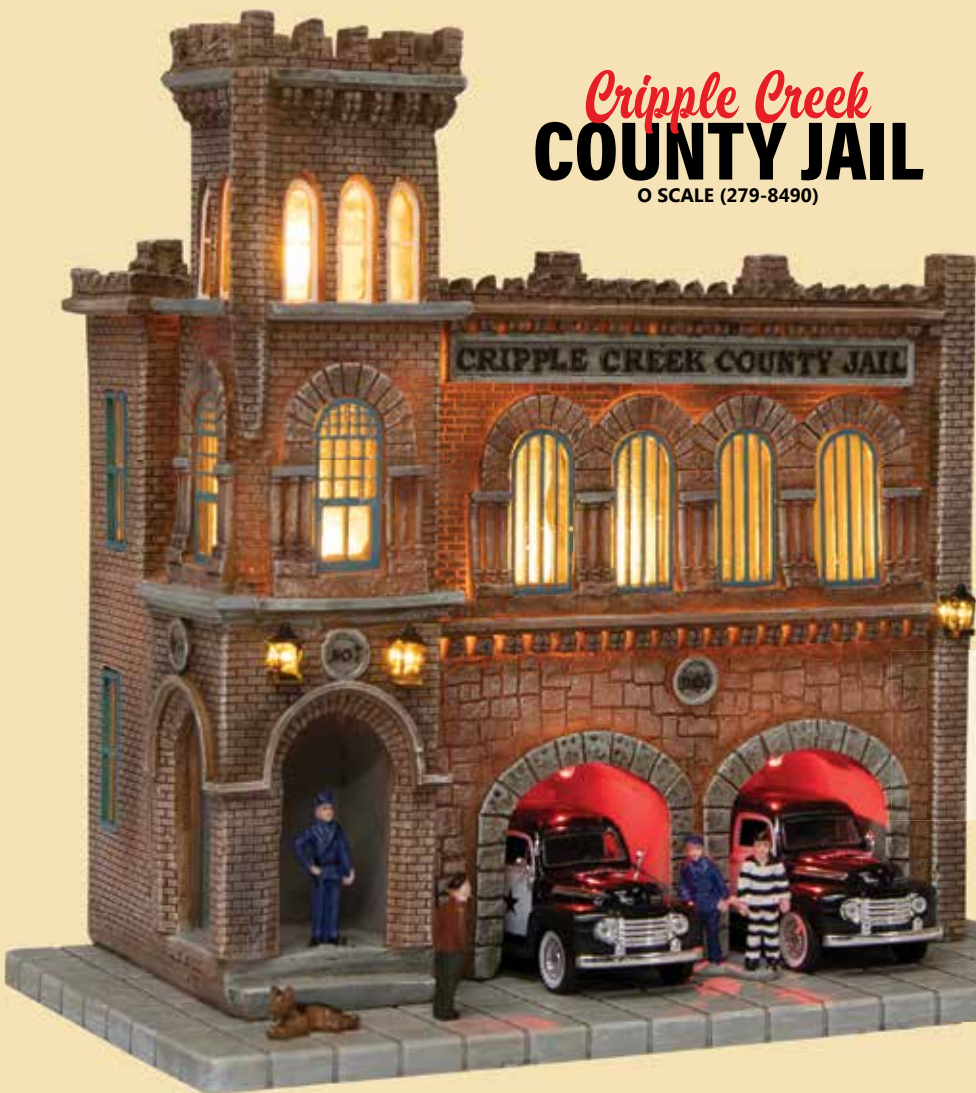
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42



40

LINEUP. SEPT/OCT 2023 VOL. 36 NO. 5

30 COVER STORY

Time machine to a postwar world

Traveling to the 1950s on an O gauge display.

BY ROGER CARP

Cover photo by Dennis Brennan

26 Back in time to the Hazlet Train Stop

Old photos revive memories of a great hobby store.

BY ROGER CARP

28 American Flyer's operating stockyard

Playing with a No. 771 brought loads of fun.

BY PAUL C. NELSON

36 Lionel's 6464-25 Great Northern boxcar

This classic O gauge model has neat variations.

BY JOE ALGOZZINI AND ROGER CARP

39 An extraordinary engine from 1915

Rare Voltamp model from a World's Fair sells for \$105,000.

BY ROGER CARP

40 Small scenes, big impact

Nine simple projects add next-level detail to your layout.

BY JOHN HUDAK

42 It's autumn every day on this O gauge layout

Walt Urban Jr. models the beauty of the season.

BY ROGER CARP

48 Scarce and unknown specials from MTA

This collecting organization created highly desirable items.

BY MIKE STELLA

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 4 Editor's desk
- 6 Letters
- 8 Modern era notes
- 10 Photo album
- 14 News & products
LCCA collectible cars,
Menards structures
- 18 Collectible classics
American Flyer No.
21004 0-4-0 switcher
- 20 Questions & answers
- 22 S gauge now and then
- 24 Views from the underground
- 50 Reviews
Lionel SD70ACe,
MTH Premier VO1000
- 57 Ad index
- 58 Locomotives we love
Lionel No. 1656
0-4-0 steam engine



18

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■ IT'S AN EXCELLENT TIME TO BE A FAN OF,

let's say, not-so-big railroads.

Once upon a time, if you didn't like huge ones like the Pennsy, Santa Fe, Union Pacific, New York Central, or Baltimore & Ohio, there wasn't much of a chance you were going to see a toy train locomotive in your favorite line's scheme. Sure, there have been surprises here and there for Rock Island and some East Coast lines like Erie, Lehigh Valley, Reading, and Seaboard over the years, but at the core have been the "name" roads.

There's some sound economic reasoning behind the decisions. Manufacturers had minimum quantities to produce to keep costs reasonable. Train companies had to know that what they were ordering would sell, and the best way to do that was to play to the largest enthusiast bases.

Today, though, we are seeing a broader number of railroads and locomotives (and rolling stock, for that matter) represented. Hobby organizations and retailers are regularly commissioning custom runs tacked on to a larger order by a manufacturer like Lionel, MTH, or Atlas O.

The train-making companies still have to decide which paint schemes will sell, and they often hew to the bigs. But as they're having the lion's share produced, others can get limited quantities of equipment painted – and often specifically detailed – for regional, short, and tourist lines.

The non-manufacturers are in touch with their constituencies and customers and have a good idea what they want. Since much of the product is more or less made to order, in theory it should all sell. That's a win for everyone involved.

Another component driving this trend is the sheer number of model prototypes for which tooling is available. Just in the past few months we've seen O gauge releases of 2-6-0 Moguls and a



The Strasburg Rail Road's 2-6-0 No. 89 is represented by a recent model from Lionel thanks to a custom run. Photo by Chris Montagna

couple of Fairbanks-Morse models, the C-Liner and the H-15-44, plus a Baldwin VO1000. It's a great time to be a hobbyist, isn't it?

Something new to read

We're introducing a new department this issue called Locomotives We Love (p. 58). Just like it says, it will feature some familiar faces talking about their favorites. Keep sending in ideas for Tips & Techniques though; we'll alternate that in.

Hal Miller, Editor

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A Santa Fe F3 in red and black

■ **A PHOTOGRAPH IN THE SPRING 2023 ISSUE** of *Classic Trains*, another Kalmbach publication, got me wondering once again about the color illustrations of the No. 2333 Santa Fe F3 diesels found in the Lionel consumer catalog for 1948. As postwar enthusiasts will recall, the brand-new O gauge models were depicted as having black sides and not the correct silver used on the full-size EMD cab units.

Let's assume the artists used by Lionel lived in New York City or somewhere else in the East, far from where Santa Fe locomotives were commonly seen. Even though the Santa Fe adopted the red-and-silver warbonnet paint scheme a decade earlier in 1937, those illustrators might never have observed it on an actual Santa Fe locomotive. Instead, they probably had to rely on color photos of the relatively new diesels. If the pictures at their disposal were shot at a similar angle as the one by Walter H. Vielbaum found in *Classic Trains*, the artists would have had good reason to think the engines had black sides. – *Matthew Smith, Superior, Wis.*



The angle at which Walter H. Vielbaum snapped this picture of a Santa Fe Alco PA in 1968 makes the silver paint on the side of the diesel look black. This may explain why artists at Lionel depicted the new No. 2333 Santa Fe F3s as red and black in the 1948 catalog.

More Marx from Aldens

I enjoyed the article in the July/August 2023 *Classic Toy Trains* by Albert Woodward about the uncataloged Marx New York Central passenger set available through Aldens. I acquired a different Marx New York Central set at an auction.

My set has an Aldens shipping label with the Marx product number 44166 to identify the set. The No. 4000 E7 cab units have the long, wing-shaped white stripes at the front. There were two No. 3557 Vista Domes and one 3557 coach – different from the

three coaches described by Woodward – plus a No. 3558 observation. The “4810” on the box was used by Aldens. – *Carl Anderson, Austin, Texas*

Seventy can be okay!

I always enjoy reading Lou Palumbo’s “Views From The Underground,” especially the one in the March/April 2023 issue. I just turned 76, so I appreciated Lou’s thoughts on why “Seventy is not so good.” Except I have to disagree and tell you how much fun I’m still having with my O gauge trains.

The reason I’m getting so much out of this hobby is because of my grandchildren. I go out of my way to get them involved, which is why I built the benchwork for my layout 24 inches off the floor. I wanted them to be able to reach everything, even if getting under the layout is hard for me. – *Rich Donofrio, Chicago*



Carl Anderson has a Marx New York Central passenger set from mail-order giant Aldens whose contents differ from those described by Albert Woodward in the July/August CTT.

Trains come in all sizes

Hal Miller’s editorial in the May/June CTT mentioned people in our hobby who have an interest in “trains” as toys only, with little or no interest in the real thing. I’ve run across such folks, too, and it all seems odd to me. I can’t understand how a passionate interest in the toys does not stimulate some interest in the prototype.

I have also run across the flip side – railroad historians and photographers with little interest in model trains. With all the beautiful, accurate models available, it’s odd that some railfans don’t want a replica of the locomotive or car that fascinates them most. – *David Lightsey, Fairhope, Ala.*

Better wiring helps

Something to avoid when you are as old as Lou Palumbo and I are (“Seventy is not so good,” March/April CTT) is spending time under your layout. My solution? Do as much wiring as possible from the top before you cover the benchwork. Also, I use 2-inch-thick sheets of high-density foam rather than

the traditional plywood. Plus, foam is quieter than plywood.

I designed my O gauge layout and the wiring diagram using RR-Track software. Making changes is so simple, and I love the 3-D rendering the program can generate.

I ran all the major wiring from the transformers to bus bars from above so all I had to do from underneath was the final hookup from the bus bars to the track and accessories. I attached two undercounter lights beneath the layout so I had good lighting while working under there without having to use a flashlight.

Running wires through the foam sheets was easy. I just poked a hole through the material with a drill or a screwdriver. For smaller wires, I used plastic soda straws as a conduit through the foam. – *Gene Cover, Houston, Texas*

Clarification

The MTH beer refrigerator cars being offered by the New Jersey Hi-Railers in the July/August issue should have been described as wood-sided. **CTT**

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9372 Seaboard Bay-Window.....	35.00
9382 Florida East Coast Bay-Window.....	45.00
16546 Clinchfield SP-Type.....	25.00
16565 Milwaukee Road Bay-Window.....	45.00
17600 NYC Woodside Standard-O.....	35.00
17601 Southern (red) Woodside St-O.....	25.00
17604 Lackawanna Woodside St-O.....	45.00
17607 Reading Steelside Smoking St-O.....	50.00
17610 Chesapeake & Ohio Steelside Smoking.....	55.00
17616 Wabash Steelside Smoking St-O.....	55.00
17611 New York Central Woodside St-O.....	45.00
17615 Northern Pacific Woodside Smoking St-O.....	55.00
19700 Chessie System Extended Vision.....	45.00
19706 Union Pacific Smoking Ext. Vision.....	49.95
19707 S.P. Searchlight Smoking Work Cab.....	65.00
19709 Pennsylvania Smoking Work Cab.....	55.00
19715 Duluth Missle Extended Vision.....	45.00
19716 Illinois Central Smoking Ext. Vision.....	95.00
19720 Soo Line Extended Vision.....	55.00
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6305 British Columbia.....	45.00
6307 Pennsylvania.....	45.00
6313 Lionel Lines (blue&orange).....	35.00
9138 Sunoco 3-Dome (black).....	30.00
9151 or 9152 Shell.....	30.00
9189 Gulf (chrome).....	30.00
9278 Lifesavers (chrome).....	125.00
9279 Magnolia 3-Dome.....	20.00
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16140 Domino's Sugar.....	40.00
17302 NJ Zinc Unibody St-O.....	40.00
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19608 Sunoco 'Aviation Services'.....	40.00
19628 Lion Oil (plated).....	44.95
26101 Len-Oil.....	30.00
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18286 Union Pacific Dash9-44CW 'Scale'.....	325.00
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18322 Lackawanna (Maroon Top) Trainmaster.....	395.00
18351 New York Central Scale S-1 Electric.....	395.00
18564 Canadian Pacific GP-9.....	225.00
18582 Seaboard NW-2 (blue & orange).....	350.00
18961 /49 Erie PA Alco 'AB'.....	450.00
1935080 Southern Pacific TMCC Trackmobile.....	224.95
2135080 BNSF Ballast Tamper.....	144.95
2135100 Conrail Ballast Tamper.....	144.95
2135130 Southern Pacific Ballast Tamper.....	144.95
14584 Wabash F-3 A-unit (PWC).....	149.95
14586 Delaware & Hudson PB-1 Alco 'Scale'.....	145.00
19865 Santa Fe PB-1 w/Railroads.....	195.00
19866 New York Central PB-1 w/Railroads.....	225.00
34545 Rio Grande F-3 LEGACY B-unit (PWC).....	225.00
34546 Southern F-3 LEGACY B-unit (PWC).....	225.00
1933562 Long Island FA Power Cab Car #609.....	299.95
1933564 Long Island FA Power Cab Car #610.....	299.95
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2032030 Florida East Coast SD70M-2 #106 (Scale).....	289.95
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31776 Lackawanna #2219w FM Frt. Set.....	395.00
38324 New Haven F-3 Freight Set #2507w.....	495.00
38329 Hudson Steam Freight Set #2261w.....	495.00
38349 C&O GP-7 Freight Set #12885-500.....	545.00
38354 Union Pacific Alco Passenger #1464w.....	475.00

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1927020 Santa Fe Passenger Car 2pk. #1.....	299.95
1927200 Norfolk Southern Excursion 4-pack.....	545.00
1927220 NS Private Car 2pk. (FEC Coach NP Dome).....	224.95
1927600 Norfolk Southern 21" Coach 2pk.....	284.95
2027130 Alaska Railroad Pass. Car 2-pack.....	349.95
2027180 Northern Southern Executive 4-pack.....	599.95
2027280 AutoTrain Vista Vision Dome Car.....	219.95
2027300 N&W Vista Vision Dome Car.....	249.95
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2127100 Rio Grande Ski Train Power Car.....	264.95
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2227370 CSX Business StationSound Diner.....	279.95
2227520 Santa Fe Vision Horse Car.....	264.95
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85230 Great Northern 18" Oriental Ltd. 2pk. #2.....	199.95
85233 Great Northern 18" Oriental Ltd. 2pk. #3.....	199.95
85336 New York Central 18" Mail Train HW 2pk.....	234.95
85351 Milw. Columbian 18" 2pk B.....	159.95
1927110 Southern Pacific 18" Coach 2pk. #1.....	299.95
1927352 Polar Express 60" RPO Car-black roof.....	109.95
1927242 Norfolk & Western Baggage Car #111.....	124.95
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1927252 Penn Central B60 Baggage Car #7551.....	124.95
1927330 Santa Fe 60" RPO Car #65.....	124.95
1927510 Missouri Pacific Sunshine Spl. 2pk. #1.....	239.95
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1927570 Defense Sealine 18" 2-pack B.....	249.95
2027110 Santa Fe Shadowline 18" 2-cars.....	239.95
2027330 Friendship Train 18" Sleeper 2pk.....	239.95
2027610 S.P. Daylight 18" StationSound Diner.....	249.95
2127200 Penn Central B60 Baggage Car #7705.....	124.95
2127210 Penn Central B60 Baggage Car #7630.....	124.95
2127250 Pullman Pool Service (Gray) 2pk.....	299.95
2127490 GMR 18" Passenger 2-pack.....	229.95

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19107 S.P. 'Daylight' Full Vista Dome 15" Alum.....	49.95
19109 to 13,28,38 Santa Fe 15" Alum. 7-Cars.....	695.00
19140 N&W 15" Alum. Combo (smooth).....	75.00
19141 N&W 15" Alum. Diner (smooth).....	75.00
19143 N&W 15" Alum. Coach (smooth).....	75.00
19183 Great Northern 15" Alum. Full Dome 2pk.....	195.00
25416 S.P. Daylight 18" Aluminum 2-Car Set.....	299.95
27917 B&O Budd Dummy Baggage Car.....	49.95
34131 PWC Lionel Lines 15" Alum. 2-Car Set.....	225.

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Modern era notes

WITH BOB KELLER

What would you save?

There might be an easy answer for you -
but maybe not



■ IN A NON-TRAINS COLLECTORS GROUP I'm in, someone had recounted a small fire at their home. It was brief, nobody was in danger, and thanks to a handy fire extinguisher, it caused no serious damage.

As it might, the discussion wandered from fire prevention to fire extinguishers, insurance, and finally, what would you save in an emergency?

There were the usual disclaimers about people and pets being safe. But if you had a window of opportunity, what single item in your collection would you save in an emergency?

At first I thought I would come up with an answer rather quickly and it would be easy. It wasn't.

I tried categorizing my railroad collection; that wasn't helpful.

Here are the parameters I considered for the items:

History – Not talking nostalgia, but is it something of historical significance? How about a prototype boxcar? A letter from A.C. Gilbert? A company mock-

The only thing I own of remotely any value is a test sample of a large-scale die-cast Ertl truck bank lettered for CTT. The lock on the bottom keeps my change safe.

up of a 1952 catalog? Nope, there's really nothing of historical significance in my collection.

Value – Strictly dollars and cents here. While I own a few locomotives with original \$1,000-plus MSRPs, I never paid more than \$400 ... a benefit of buying used gear. So nothing of a high-dollar value that I had to save for fear of financial loss.

Unique or uncommon – I never use the word rare with toy trains. There are a lot of items that are truly uncommon, such as postwar mock-ups of unmanufactured road names or prototypes of



Really, this tag from Ertl denoting the model as a production sample is the most valuable piece of the truck.

accessories. I have a grand total of none of these in my collection.

Sentiment – OK, this is where the rubber meets the road. Trains you have a connection to. I still have most of the trains I was gifted between 1955 and '65. They have a lot of mileage on them. There are worn wheels, faded paint where thumbs and fingers picked them up, and certainly dings from wrecks and even being dropped.

The closest things I have to rare are a test sample from Ertl of a large scale *Classic Toy Trains* truck I scored on eBay and an unpainted test model of an MTH RailKing Amtrak Super-Liner car, also bought online. Neither, though, is worth an emergency dash to the basement.

A few years ago I covered the rolling stock and my Lionel Nos. 41 and 6250 switchers in bubble wrap and put them in their own air-tight tub. I did it more for damage prevention than quick evacuation.

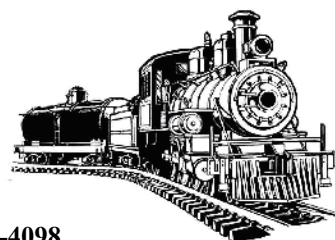
In the end, nostalgia and the 10,000 times I'd lain on the floor moving freight and passengers to their destinations would win out. What you would save? **CTT**



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↑ **STEPHEN MAYER'S O GAUGE LAYOUT**

Favorite travel spots often influence the scenes model railroaders create for their layouts. This is very much the case with Stephen Mayer, who has long enjoyed exploring the sights of upstate New York near his home in Romulus as well as areas in central Pennsylvania. No wonder a visit to Scranton in the Keystone State inspired him to construct from scratch a replica of a turntable there. Stephen, who snapped this picture, has posed on his fourth O gauge layout a prized Lionel No. 736 2-8-4 Berkshire steam engine and tender. The postwar stallion has just finished being serviced by the crew at the Golden Valley Locomotive Works.

WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

Please send your best pictures to CTT Photo Album, 21027 Crossroads Circle, Waukesha, WI 53187-1612 or email them to photoalbum@ClassicToyTrains.com. Digital photos must be taken with the camera set at the largest possible file size. 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. If your photograph is published, we will pay you \$50 as long as we have not previously bought the photo. For more on photos specs, please go to trains.com/ctt/magazine/contributor-guidelines/



→ CLEM KRZECZKOWSKI'S O GAUGE LAYOUT

When fellow O gauge modeler Charles Stoia was photographing the 22 x 36-foot layout belonging to his friend Clem Krzeczowski for *Classic Toy Trains*, he wasn't sure whether juxtaposing some soldiers on maneuvers with two massive steam engines blasting by on the double-track main line made sense. After all, which war were the recruits preparing for in the forests near Clem's home in Blissfield, Mich.? Taking a more relaxed approach, Clem assured Charlie that everything shown here was a reenactment! Restored steamers and weekend warriors were having fun recalling life in the late 1940s. The trains were entertaining railfans, and the civilians in uniform recalled postwar days.



↑ KEN BALDWIN'S S GAUGE LAYOUT

A long section of the main line on Ken Baldwin's S gauge railroad, which will be featured in a future issue of *Classic Toy Trains*, run parallel to the river where folks enjoy swimming, rafting, and fishing. The Milwaukee Road 4-6-2 Pacific guiding a short passenger train east toward the small town served quite well by Clark's Trading Post comes from the American Models product line (No. 46003). Chuck Wingate, another S gauge enthusiast whose layout was presented in the July 2019 issue, assisted Ken with the layout in Westport, Mass., and then stopped over to take this picture. The majestic pine trees make you wonder whether Ken's layout is set in Maine.





↑ THOMAS KAISER'S O GAUGE LAYOUT

Only on a toy train layout, where the imaginations of modelers can soar to the greatest heights, will you see an SD80MAC road diesel (introduced in 1995) streaking around a triple-track main line bearing the Tuscan Red and gold stripes of the Pennsylvania RR. Why? Because O gauge enthusiasts, including Thomas Kaiser whose three-rail display in Toms River, N.J., will soon be showcased in *Classic Toy Trains*, have no problem operating a beautiful Lionel model (No. 38729 from 2012) decorated for a railroad whose distinguished history ended in 1967, almost three decades before the first full-size SD80MAC left the Electro-Motive shops. Tom, whose layout Caroline Cookman skillfully photographed for our magazine, merely shrugs and says fudging the facts of history makes the hobby more fun for him.

→ CLAUDE MANDIA'S O GAUGE LAYOUT

If you head to Claude Mandia's home in Cedar Park, Texas, looking forward to enjoying his 10½ x 12-foot layout, well, all we can tell you is that you're in for a big surprise. As Claude puts it modestly, "My O gauge layout is a bit different." To make it possible for his grandchildren to have more fun with the postwar trains he operates, Claude built the three-rail display on the floor! Benchwork doesn't exist to lift the layout off ground level! Who would believe from the picture he snapped that the Lionel No. 2354 New York Central F3 cab unit is emerging from a mountain the kids could easily step on?





← **BRUCE PFEIFER'S O GAUGE LAYOUT**

From the moment we glimpsed this photo shared by Bruce Pfeifer on the popular *Classic Toy Trains* forum found on Trains.com, we knew it would be the perfect addition to Photo Album. Bruce, whose O gauge layout in Parkville, Md., was the subject of an article in the January 2008 issue, captured the eye-catching Lionel No. 83167 model of a GG1 electric decked in the patriotic scheme adopted by Conrail for the bicentennial of American independence in 1976. Cool isn't it how Bruce coupled the Happy 4th of July boxcar right behind the handsome engine.



↑ **DANIEL PADOVA'S O GAUGE LAYOUT**

The O gauge model railroad Daniel Padova finished not long ago represents the culmination of a lifelong dream. Somehow or other, he's always been playing a game of catch-up when it comes to Lionel trains. As a kid in the late 1950s, he was the last in his neighborhood to get them and now he's rushing to fill his layout in Fort Washington, Pa., with postwar favorites and modern-era reissues. The Nos. 350 transfer table and 465 sound dispatching station here were wonders he missed many decades ago. Dan, retired after a rewarding career as a master carpenter, enjoys them every second possible. Striding ahead on the movable track is a Lionel No. 84967 LionChief Plus Pennsylvania RR A5 0-4-0 steam switcher from 2018.

WITH THE CTT STAFF



CUSTOM-BUILT FOR TUNNELS.

Grzybowski's Train Store is offering a custom-run Lionel Legacy SD40T-2 painted in R.J. Corman livery with road number No. 3314 (No. 2333620). Features include Bluetooth control, see-through vents on the sides, legible warning signs, LED headlights, fan-driven smoke units, updated diesel sounds, front and rear Electro-couplers, and hand-painted crew figures in the cab. The O gauge engine is **\$584.95** plus shipping and can be ordered at www.grzybowski-trains.com or by calling **570-451-1700**.

● [REVIEW AT TRAINS.COM/CTT](http://REVIEW.AT.TRAINS.COM/CTT)

A CARLOAD OF HOLIDAY CHEER. The Lionel Collectors Club of America has announced a special O gauge Lionel-built Christmas boxcar for its members. This year's car includes traditional holiday graphics on both sides and the top. It runs on O-31 curves, has working couplers, and is being painted and assembled in the United States by the train maker. Each car is 10½ inches long with opening 3-panel doors and is priced at **\$90 plus shipping and handling**. It's available to LCCA members on a one-per member basis while supplies last. If you are not a member of the club and would like to start your own LCCA Christmas car tradition, visit Lionelcollectors.org or call the business office at **815-223-0115** 7 am-4 pm Central time, Monday-Friday. Club members can order from the LCCA website store or by calling the business office.



SWEET AND FLAT. This O gauge Pennsylvania RR Flatcar with 1956 Hershey's Tractor & Trailer Set from Menards (No. 275-9051; \$29.99) has a chassis with metal wheels, operating couplers, and gold truck frames. The tractor and trailer are detailed models decorated with vintage Hershey colors and logos. Each piece of equipment is loaded on a Pennsylvania RR flatcar. Each set is uniquely numbered, so no two are the same. Also available as an eight-piece set with eight flatcars, four trucks, and four trailers (No. 275-9052; **\$99.99**).



NEW RAILROAD PAINTS. Heartland Hobby Wholesale has been appointed exclusive North American distributor for the AMMO "Rail Center" line by Mig Jimenez. The range encompasses 44 paints and 36 weathering finishes. They are odorless and clean up with water. The bottles have flip-top lids and a metal stirring ball. In addition to individual colors, there are sets for North American railroads with six bottles each. The offerings also include accessories and how-to books. For more information visit hhwonline.com



DIESEL SERVICING DETAIL. Atlas O is offering an all-metal locomotive sanding tower for 2024. Paint schemes include Union Pacific; Santa Fe; BNSF; Norfolk & Western; Pennsylvania RR; and Southern Pacific. Painted but unlettered O gauge towers in black and silver will also be available. They are **\$59.95**; place orders at shop.atlasrr.com



SIX-AXLE STREAMLINER. An Electro-Motive Division E8A diesel locomotive has joined the Atlas O Premier line. The six-axle passenger hauler, scheduled for release in the second quarter of 2024, will be decorated for Rock Island (red and yellow), Amtrak (silver, red, and blue), NJ Commuter (blue, silver, and red transition scheme), Penn Central (black and white), and Kansas City Southern (green, yellow, and red). Each paint scheme will be offered in two road numbers; unpowered units will also be available decorated for Amtrak, KCS, PC, and RI. Features on the O gauge E8A will include an ABS body, die-cast metal chassis, ProtoSound 3.0 (powered units only), and two factory-installed and painted crew figures. The model will operate on O-31 curves. Powered units are **\$599.95**; unpowered are **\$279.95**. Visit the manufacturer's website at shop.atlasrr.com

READY FOR LIFT-OFF. The Menards O Scale Rocket Launching Tower represents a Saturn V and the attendant infrastructure needed to service it. The rocket itself is 13½ inches tall; its launch tower is 16½ inches tall. The tower has ample steady and flashing LED lighting, and the pad has a steam effect that uses water instead of smoke fluid. Requires a 4.5-volt transformer (No. 279-4062 or 279-4050). The item (No. 275-9032) is **\$99.99**. Visit Menards.com/trains

● [REVIEW AT TRAINS.COM/CTT](http://Trains.com/CTT)



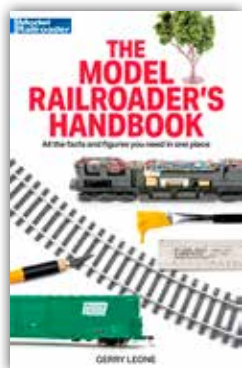
FOR PETE'S SAKE. The Lionel Collectors Club of America is turning up the heat and offering two very saucy Lionel-built O gauge cars to its members. The "Texas Pete Heat Fleet" includes a tank car and a matching boxcar. Both will navigate O-31 curves, have die-cast metal trucks and working couplers, and are painted and assembled in the USA by Lionel. The boxcar is 10½ inches long with opening waffle doors. The tank car has a plastic body and frame with die-cast platforms, safety railings, and stamped-metal sides. They are **\$90 each plus shipping and handling**, and available to LCCA members on a one-each basis while supplies last. To join, visit Lionelcollectors.org or calling the business office at **815- 223-0115** from 7 am to 4 pm Central time, Monday-Friday. Club members can order from the LCCA website store or by calling the business office.

TO SUBMIT PRODUCTS send complete ordering information and a large, hi-res photo as an email attachment to hmiller@kalmbach.com or on a CD by mail to Hal Miller, Classic Toy Trains magazine, P.O. Box 1612, Waukesha, WI 53187-1612.

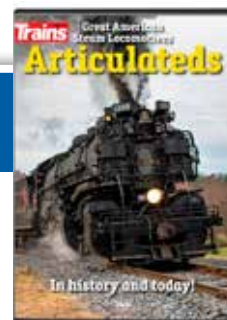
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ALL-IN-ONE REFERENCE. Get all the facts and formulas you need to know (but can't always remember) in *The Model Railroader's Handbook* by popular *Trains*.com personality and noted modeler Gerry Leone. Inside the 288-page softcover book you'll learn how to decipher resistor codes, build different types of benchwork, get tips on cleaning track, and much more. The comprehensive workbench reference is priced at **\$24.99**.



MY KIND OF TOWN. Back by popular demand is *Chicago, America's Railroad Capital* from the editors of our sister magazine *Trains*. The 98-page special includes a historical overview of how and why the city became the nation's rail hub, a look at seven train-watching spots, and three big maps. There are key updates to several articles, a new look at Metra, and a story and map not included in the original publication. Print and digital editions are **\$9.95 each**; get both for **\$14.95**. The digital edition is powered by Zinio and compatible with PC, Macintosh, Android via Google Play app, iOS via AppStore, and Win8 devices.



STEAM SHOWCASE. Learn more about the largest locomotives to ever roam the rails in *Great American Steam Locomotives: Articulated*. The DVD features Columbia River Belt Line *Skookum*, the first articulated built by the Baldwin Locomotive Works; the Black Hills Central RR, one of America's oldest tourist lines; Western Maryland Scenics 1309, the last articulated built, which returned to service in 2020; Union Pacific Challenger 3985 and Big Boy 4014; and more. The DVD has a run time of more than 90 minutes and is priced at **\$27.99**.

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AND SOME CARS FOR THAT E8A. Atlas O will also be producing streamlined passenger cars to go along with its six-axle streamliner. Two-car sets (**\$239.90**) will be decorated for Penn Central (PC), Amtrak (AMTK), Burlington Northern (BN), NJ Commuter, and Rock Island (RI). Four-car sets (**\$479.80**) will be lettered for AMTK, BN, NJ Commuter, PC, Kansas City Southern (KCS), and RI. Paint schemes to be offered on single

cars (**\$119.95**) will include AMTK, BN, NJ Commuter, and KCS. The O gauge cars, scheduled for release in the second quarter of 2024, will feature an ABS body, a stamped metal floor, and constant voltage overhead light-emitting-diode illumination. The Premier line passenger cars will operate on O-42 curves. To learn more about the car types and to see all the paint schemes, visit shop.atlasrr.com



AGGREGATE HAULER. This rapid-discharge hopper is another new model joining the Atlas O Premier line in the second quarter of next year. Scheduled paint schemes are Florida East Coast (Oxide Red), Amtrak (yellow), Bessemer & Lake Erie (black), Chessie System (black), General American Marks Co. (blue), and Southern Pacific (Oxide Red). Each road name will be available in four numbers. Features on the O gauge rapid-discharge hopper (**\$84.95**) will include an ABS body, die-cast metal trucks, and factory-applied metal handrails. The car will operate on O-31 curves. Visit shop.atlasrr.com for updates on this model.

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American Flyer No. 21004 switcher

S gauge 0-6-0 steamer based on a Pennsy prototype



Model courtesy Tim Price

■ FLYER AND LIONEL

battled it out toe-to-toe during the postwar era, but certain areas belonged to one firm, including steam switchers. The A.C. Gilbert Co. brought out models that surpassed its competitors in looks and operation, along with longevity.

Besides 0-8-0 models, the Flyer lineup featured S gauge replicas of the Pennsylvania RR's B6sb 0-6-0. The place to begin when studying the switchers is the No. 21004, an uncataloged gem from 1957.

tender: Nos. 201, 203, 232, and 233. The finest among the B6 switchers was the No. 701 (cataloged in 1941 and '42).

The Gilbert Co. didn't return fire until 1941, when it brought out the No. 574, a die-cast metal model of a USRA 0-8-0. The tender packed with the O gauge switcher had graphics for the Nickel Plate Road, the nickname of the New York, Chicago & St. Louis RR, part of the New York Central System. How ironic, considering that subsidiary didn't

change to reflect modifications made to the motor and the addition of smoke mechanisms and "choo-choo" sound, but the 0-8-0 would be a notable member of the line, available for separate sale and as the motive power for work trains.

Lionel all but raised the white flag to acknowledge the switcher wars had been lost. It failed to revive the 0-6-0 after the war, instead cataloging a pair of 0-4-0 models in the late 1940s and then trying halfheartedly to return to the fight with the lightly detailed, low-end Nos. 1615 and 1625 steam switchers in 1955-57 and 1958.

Given how little competition Gilbert faced in the specialized niche of toy steam switchers, especially at a time when full-size railroads were moving forward with diesels of all sizes, it seems strange that designers opted for an S gauge version of a B6 0-6-0 in 1957. Yet they brought out the 21004.

Identical models

According to the first volume of *Greenberg's Guide to American Flyer S Gauge*, the 21004 was an uncataloged switcher equipped with a black plastic three-piece boiler painted

black with a white number under the cab (mistakenly shown as 263). Exterior features included an operating headlight with a clear lens, a functioning knuckle coupler in the front, a metal bell on top, wire handrails, and white tires.

Inside each 21004 there was a worm-drive motor boasting Pull-Mor power as well as a two-position reverse unit. A smoke mechanism and Flyer's "choo-choo" sound enhanced the 0-6-0 further. It came with a slope-back tender (also painted black over a black plastic shell) given an operating light at the rear and an operating knuckle coupler.

A cataloged version of the Pennsylvania RR 0-6-0 was designated 21005 and was offered at \$27.50. It was assigned to one inexpensive train set in 1957 and '58, and as such, left no doubt Flyer would be the ultimate victor in the postwar switcher wars.

The A.C. Gilbert Co. offered the No. 21004 switcher as an uncataloged item in 1957. The 2023 edition of *Greenberg's Pocket Price Guide to American Flyer* values the model at \$170 in good condition and \$294 in excellent condition. **CTT**

What might be deemed the "switcher wars" broke out in 1939, when Lionel made its classic O gauge replica of the venerable Pennsylvania RR B6 0-6-0 steam switcher, introduced in 1902.

Prewar roots

What might be deemed the "switcher wars" broke out in 1939, when Lionel made its classic O gauge replica of the Pennsylvania RR B6 0-6-0 steam switcher, introduced in 1902. Curiously, Lionel offered versions with different numbers: Nos. 227, 228, 230, and 231. Next in 1940 arrived more detailed scale models of the 0-6-0 paired with a slope-back

own a single 0-8-0, though 75 of the 175 full-size engines built belonged to the NYC.

Gilbert takes over

American Flyer trains shifted from three-rail O gauge to two-rail S gauge after World War II. The locomotives for 1946 again included a Nickel Plate Road 0-8-0 (renumbered as 342) and would through 1958. The numbers would

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Q I have the Lionel No. 3356 Operating Horse Car and Corral my father bought new back in 1957 or '58. Unfortunately, the horses no longer go up the ramp to board the railcar. How do I take care of this problem?
— Jeffrey Shultz, Dillsburg, Pa.

A This is a fairly common problem with a simple fix. The rubber horses rely on the tiny flexible fingers on the bottom of their base to vibrate through the car and corral. Your original horses are now more than 60 years old and so likely aren't as pliable as they once were. I recommend that you look to see that the fingers are soft and not worn. If they are hard, distorted, or missing, go buy replacement horses. The vibration of the corral can be adjusted.

Basic Lionel and American Flyer uncoupling problem

Q Several of my postwar Lionel and American Flyer freight and passenger cars uncouple while running on my home layout. The couplers latch and open fine manually and can make several laps around the layout, but sooner or later they come uncoupled and not always in the same place on the layout. What could be the cause of this problem? What can I do to fix it? — Joe Kubacka, North Huntingdon, Pa.

A The couplers on postwar Lionel cars typically rely on a spring to hold the coupler closed. On electromagnetic couplers, there's a coil spring behind the plunger inside the coupler shank. On magnetic couplers, the leaf spring holds the armature plate on the bottom of the truck. A leaf spring is installed on Timken-style plastic trucks, but it now runs along the bottom of the coupler shank.

Since it's the same coupler every time that's uncoupling, it seems to me that the coupler itself is the problem. Look for damaged or misaligned parts first. If the

coupler head in a magnetic coupler truck is bent upwards, it will open by itself.

If all seems well there, I recommend you check the springs to make sure they provide sufficient tension to keep the knuckle closed. Some can be adjusted slightly, but if they need more tension than that, I advise replacing them.

Faulty Train Master horn

Q The horn on my Lionel No. 2321 Lackawanna Train Master road diesel works only when the engine is sitting in neutral. When I use my Lionel type-KW transformer to have it go forward or backward, the relay doesn't close, so there's no horn. Can you figure out how I can fix this problem? — David Klein, Lee's Summit, Mo.



Modern diesels off the tracks

Q I have two Lionel locomotives from the 1970s—the Nos. 8111 Detroit, Toledo & Ironton NW2 diesel switcher and 8771 Great Northern U36B road diesel. Both are equipped with rubber traction tires. The motor trucks frequently climb the rails on my layout (built with Marx O-34 curves), often going toward the inside

A Knowing the horn does blow suggests the circuit is wired properly, the horn is good, and so is the battery. You should check to see whether the rollers and complete hot power path are clean and not overly lubricated. Maybe something in the whistle circuit of the transformer is out of adjustment. A technician at a qualified service station should be able to check the pickup voltage and the holding voltage on the KW.

The horn on the Lionel No. 2321 Train Master will catch everyone's attention when it works as designed.

of the curve regardless of which way they're traveling. The tires aren't loose, and the track has been screwed down and is clean and smooth. Any answers to solving this problem? – *Mike Small, Greensboro, N.C.*

A You'll need to watch the train go through the problem area very slowly if you hope to see exactly what is happening. I'm thinking that somewhere there is a bent curve rail being squeezed in and altering the track gauge. Just fix that!

Generator car fan won't turn

Q The fan in my Lionel No. 3530 generator car does not turn. I replaced the rubber washer to no avail. What do I do? – *Robert Boone, Moreno Valley, Calif.*



When the small fan installed on a Lionel No. 3530 General Motors generator car (cataloged from 1956 through 1958) doesn't turn, just a few minor adjustments will be necessary to fix things.

A I assume you have checked everything electrically and the coil is getting power when the sliding door is opened. Now on to the drive washer, which is being made by different manufacturers. I prefer the three-finger versions.

Next, be sure that the shaft on the fan is perfectly straight and free from rust. Also, there must be nothing in the hole in the coil to impede the spinning of the fan. Cleanliness is essential to getting the fan to work; so also is adding no lubrication. **CTT**

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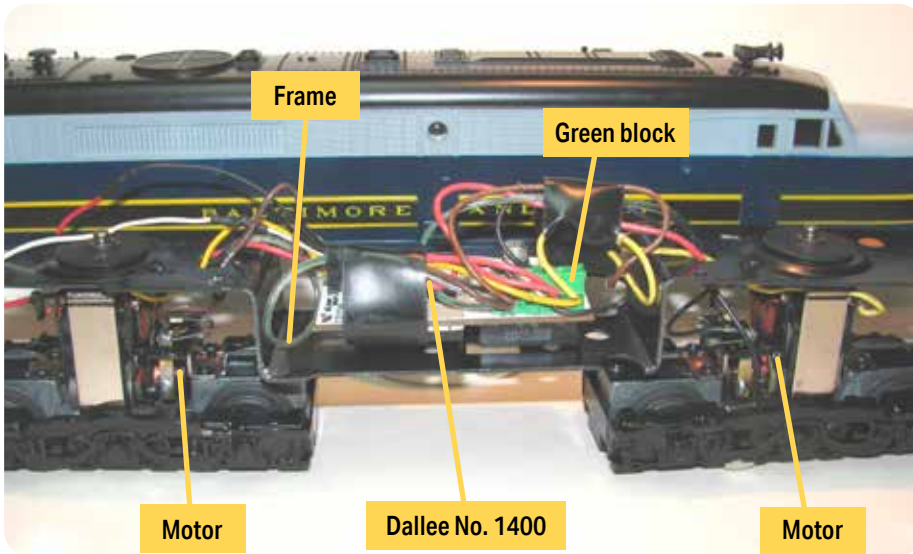
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E-unit replacement

If you can cut a few wires, you can do this project



■ I CAN EASILY REMEMBER THE EXCITEMENT IN 1980, when Lionel announced it was going to resume making American Flyer engines. I still hear people saying they wish Lionel had continued to use the postwar A.C. Gilbert Co. motors.

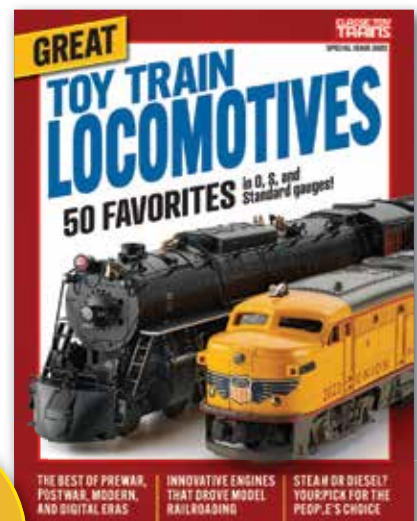
While the new motors are similar, they aren't exactly the same. Of course, now the reversing units are solid state and not mechanical. The big difference is these motors have a double-wound field so when the engine changed directions, the E-unit switched to a different winding.

The heart of the motor style was its E-unit, and that will only work with this motor. Therein lies the problem: The E-unit was produced only for a single year.

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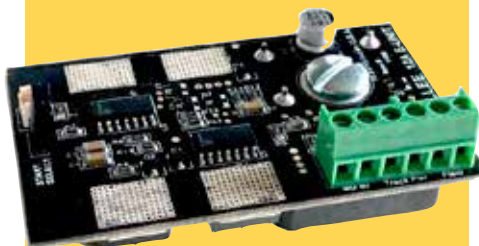
In 2009 one of the E-units in my Lionel Southern Pacific *Daylight* Alco PA failed. This led me to search for another reverser, but no originals were available. To replace it I ordered a Dallee No. 1400, a 10-amp model that cost about \$80. The Alco has two motors, so a 4-amp unit won't work.

Here's how to install the Dallee unit. After removing the engine shell, unscrew the old E-unit, cutting all the wires close to the item so you have plenty of length left to install the new reversing unit. You also must unscrew and remove the direction lock switch; it isn't needed anymore.

The replacement E-unit needs to be fastened to the chassis by drilling a new hole. Nominally, it should be $\frac{7}{32}$ "; I didn't have that bit, so I used $\frac{1}{4}$ ".

The Dallee board is about the same width as the chassis. Carefully drill the hole in the center of the frame. If it's not in the right spot, it will be hard to put the body shell on. When done, fit the unit to the chassis; use the nut to secure it.

Time for wiring. Take the black track power wires from each truck, strip the ends if needed, and wire them to the two terminals in the center of the green block.



The Dallee No. 1400 model is a 10-amp reversing unit that works with locomotives that have two motors.

Then put a wire from each headlight into each of the same slots.

For the motor brush wiring, you'll need to separate the strands for each brush. This may mean disconnecting one brush wire leading into a field connection on the motors. Each of the two brushes on each of the motors must have a length of wire to reach the green block. Use screws 1 and 2.

You'll notice the motors face inward. You must pair the wires on the same side of the chassis from each. Twist the ends of the paired wires and connect to slot 1 or 2.

The most complicated part of the process is wiring the fields to the E-unit. I took the motor off the chassis by taking

the truck covers off and prying the circle clip off the top of the motor mounting. Be careful; they will fly across the room!

Examine the field. The green and red enameled wires indicate double winding.

To get the engine running you are going to cut both ends of *either* the red or green wires. Choose one before starting. You'll have to insulate the cut end after. Do this on both motors.

Run a wire from each end of the colored field wire you're using to the green block. Again, pair the wires from each of the motor's fields into either slot 5 or 6 and tighten. Remount the motors.

Test it before you put the shell back on. Put it on the track or lay the engine on its side and apply power to the pickups. The new unit should cycle properly with the motors running in the same direction. If not, swap the pairings on the brush wiring and test again. **CTT**

Bill Clark is a life-long S gauge operator and collector. He has written reviews for S Gaugian magazine about American Flyer.



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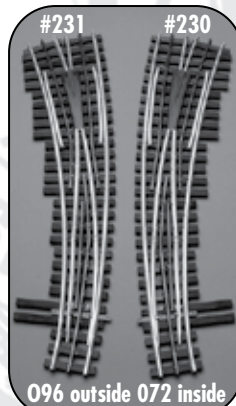
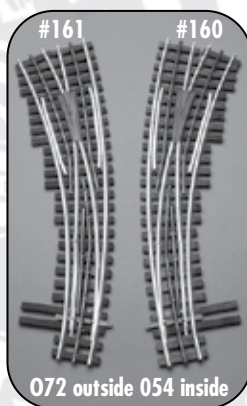
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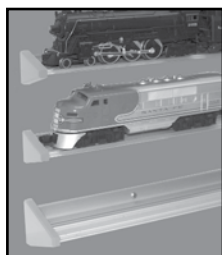
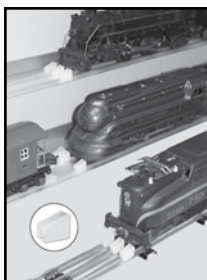


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■ **UNTIL RECENTLY**, most of the train shows I attended seemed pretty much the same. I'm talking about tight aisles and crowded tables. And the organizers didn't make the shows the most enjoyable experience for anyone going to buy or sell new and vintage toy trains.

Now, however, shows seem a lot different – and in this case, different means they're better and more comfortable for everyone. The tables are spread out more, and the aisles are a lot wider.

Let's pause for a moment or two to think about why train shows have changed and gotten better. There are some important reasons that reflect the current state of the hobby.

One key factor is that dealer attendance has decreased somewhat, at least at the shows I am aware of. Fewer people selling trains naturally means more room.

Another point about why the aisles are wider relates to the people going to shows. Namely, more of them are using motorized scooters because of their age or particular health reasons. The folks organizing toy train shows became aware of that change and wisely realized they needed to make aisles wider so the scooters could get around safely.

Sometimes, I think we need traffic cops to maintain order with the increased number of scooters driving through the aisles. Often, a fellow on a scooter is looking at items on the tables and not paying attention to the guy walking in front of him. Ouch!

No worries! The motorized scooters are good simply because they allow more people to enjoy the hobby.

When I think about scooters, my mind quickly goes to the handicapped stickers I see in cars parked at train shows. To be honest, I used to resent the stickers many guys have. I would get

mad when I would go to a show or just a retail store where I live and have to walk a mile because of the handicapped places in front of that establishment.

I really would blow my top when I'd see a healthy-looking older guy carrying three bags of groceries to his car parked in one of those designated handicapped spots. Sure, he had a handicapped sticker, but I couldn't help wondering how and why he got it.

Then, of course, I reached the age of 70. Everything changed. I had more than enough ailments to qualify for a handicapped placard. I realized the need for a sticker and am glad train shows are making accommodations for increased number of hobbyists like me who find it tough to spend hours on our feet, walking the aisles and looking for trains.

In my upcoming book, *Seventy is Not so Good Unless It's Your Golf Score*, I write about handicapped stickers, and their importance as you get older.

Let's face it: Our train collector society continues to get older, and therefore we have to make allowances for as many people as possible to enjoy this wonderful and lasting hobby.

More of my buddies are getting handicapped placards. These are the same guys who made fun of me when I got mine! It now seems to be a badge of honor to possess that blue-and-white placard. To my buddies I say, "What goes around comes around!" Handicapped parking placards are helpful and should be used by folks who need them.

Keep searchin'. **CTT**

LOU PALUMBO, the owner of the Underground Railroad Shoppe in New Castle, Pa., writes this exclusive column for *Classic Toy Trains*. He can be reached at 1906 Wilmington Rd., New Castle, PA 16105 or by email at trainplum@yahoo.com



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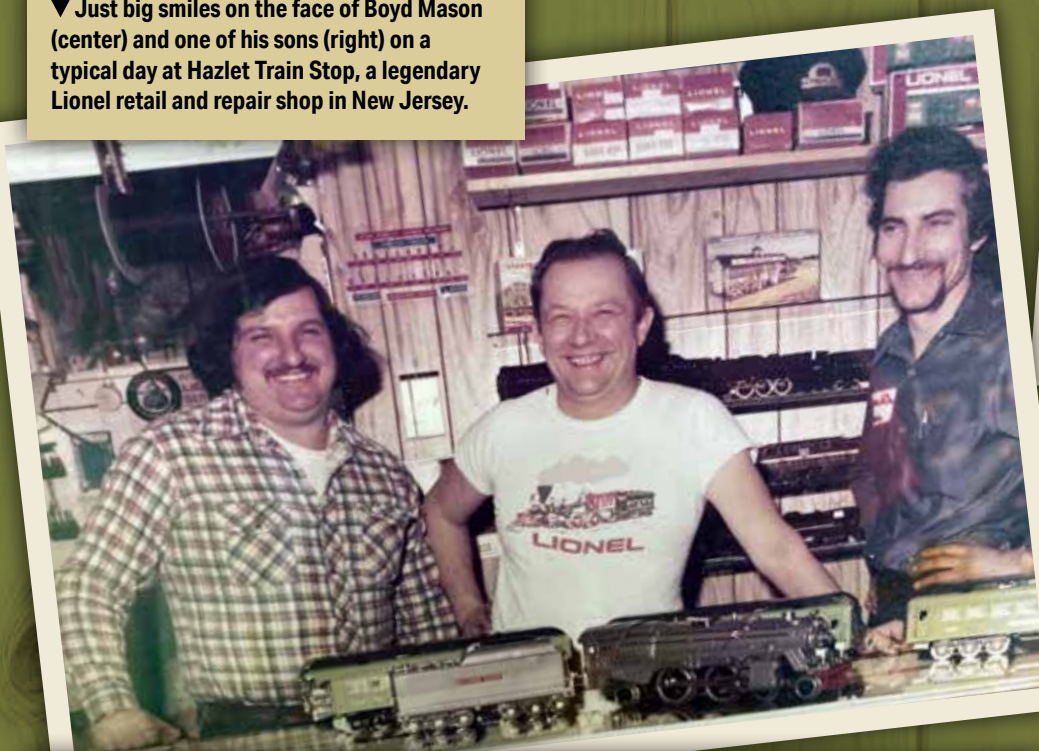
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Back in time to **Hazlet Train Stop**

▼ Just big smiles on the face of Boyd Mason (center) and one of his sons (right) on a typical day at Hazlet Train Stop, a legendary Lionel retail and repair shop in New Jersey.



◀ Among the highlights at Hazlet Train Stop was the original painted display poster created by artisans at the Lionel factory around 1951 for a business near the Panama Canal.



▼ The exterior of Hazlet Train Stop couldn't have been simpler – just a residential spot in a small town in the Raritan Valley region of New Jersey, not far from New York City.



▼ Boyd enjoyed bringing out some of the best prewar trains he had acquired. Sometime in the 1990s, he posed this Lionel Standard gauge No. 378W Broadway Limited.



Old photos revive memories of a great hobby store

STORY BY ROGER CARP ● Photos by Alex Mason

One of the highlights of the early years of *Classic Toy Trains* came when founding editor Dick Christianson visited Boyd Mason at Hazlet Train Stop, an outlet for new and vintage Lionel trains in New Jersey. Dick described his visit in the October 1990 issue.

What a thrill when a year ago a family member shared pictures of the store. Alex Mason had dug up a handful of shots of the interior of the business from the 1980s, along with a photo of the store's modest exterior.

■ Background

The story of Hazlet Train Stop is really the story of the Mason family. Going back 90 years ago, Boyd's father regularly brought home Lionel trains from his travels while in the U.S. Navy. Running the locomotives and cars offered young Boyd terrific fun, although there were occasional issues. He patiently diagnosed the problem and figured out how to fix whatever was wrong.

As was so often the case with the Lionel outlets established in the 1930s and '40s, what began with an enterprising individual repairing trains for himself and a handful of neighbors eventually blossomed into a full-time business. Boyd Mason, after learning the ropes at Hobby-Land in New York City, launched Hazlet Train Stop not far from his home.

The store flourished throughout the 1950s and '60s, as Boyd confidently fixed Lionel trains and other brands while stocking a growing inventory of brand-new items. He was also putting together an impressive collection of prewar and postwar trains that ran the gamut from Standard gauge to O gauge. In the 1970s, he decided to broaden the appeal of his business by building an enormous layout. His sons and daughters (Alex, Gary, Jeff, Lyne, Beth, and Colleen) worked right next to their dad, and the Mason team had it up and running quickly. Help also came from the sons-in-law and friends.

■ Important legacy

The details of how Boyd developed his business and assembled a spectacular collection were outlined in the October 1990 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*. Even so, I don't want to overlook some of the highlights of the history of Hazlet Train Stop.

Besides having on display some of the finest and most significant models in Boyd's collection of more than 10,000 trains, the store served as a hub for people who were just getting into the toy train hobby in the 1980s and '90s. Everyone who walked inside, regardless of their background with Lionel and other trains, was made to feel welcome. Boyd and his sons and daughters treated customers with courtesy, always trying to help.

Maybe that was one of the reasons celebrities with ties to New York and New Jersey made surprise visits. The best example was Frank Sinatra, who enjoyed talking shop with residents of the Garden State while he was on tour.

In addition, gems from Boyd's collection showed up on television shows and in motion pictures. Alex remembered his father providing a prewar O gauge set for *Judge Horton and the Scottsboro Boys*, a TV docudrama broadcast in 1976, and later sending models for use on *The Guiding Light*, a daytime soap opera. Boyd was also involved with the toy trains used as props in TV newscasts, commercials, and the beloved comedy *Arthur* from 1981.

Given enough time, Alex could regale us with even more memories and great tales from the illustrious history of Hazlet Train Stop. The Mason family carries on its legacy by continuing to repair and restore vintage trains and accessories (contact: ddtrainn1@verizon.net). For now, we'll let the terrific full-color pictures Alex found and shared with CTT tell the story. **CTT**



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of car! Stock Car has two sliding doors to permit loading on one end and unloading from other end. Yard has realistic five-bar corral fence. Base is painted grass green. Stock shed enameled brown with green roof and yellow window trim. Base is designed to lock track in position and is equipped with contact mechanism for operation of Car. Includes Stock Yard, Car, Cattle, Operating Track Section and Controls.

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TROOP INTO THE
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No. 771 Operating Stock Yard measures 11" long by 10 1/2" wide by 2 1/2" high. Stock Car is 7 13/16" long.

34



The American Flyer No. 771 Operating Stockyard and Car made its debut in the S gauge line in 1950. The author received one as a boy and has enjoyed it ever since.

AMERICAN FLYER'S OPERATING STOCKYARD

Accessories! They were vital parts of every S and O gauge model railroad built in the post-World War II era when I came of age and assembled my first American Flyer layout. The inventors at the A.C. Gilbert Co. came up with so many classics then.

The Gilbert catalog for 1949 neatly summarizes the philosophy there: "It is hard to tell what is more fun: operating trains or operating [the] sensational loading equipment. It is the combination that makes railroading with American Flyer a glorious adventure, full of realistic action."

As proof, the brilliant designers at Gilbert brought out in 1950 a sensational operating accessory that brought me hours of enjoyment. I treasured my No. 771 operating stockyard and have made it a part of every S gauge layout I've built.

Playing with a No. 771 brought loads of fun

STORY BY PAUL C. NELSON

Excitement for 1950

The operating stockyard appeared in the landmark year of 1950, just one year after Lionel brought out its No. 3656 operating stockyard and cattle car. The Flyer version was cataloged long after Lionel dropped its 3656 after 1955. But its number changed: 771 through 1954, K771 from 1953 to '56, and 23771 from 1957 through '61.

The Flyer stockyard remained basically unchanged during those years. As Maury Romer, a Gilbert executive overseeing the development of the S gauge line, put it: "I liked the little cows loading into the car; I thought that was a good number."

The 1952 edition of the *American Flyer Instruction Book* was similarly positive:

"The No. 771 Stock Yard and Car is undoubtedly the most fascinating piece of equipment ever made for model railroads."

Basic information

The second volume of *Greenberg's Guide to American Flyer S Gauge* (1991) includes a lengthy and detailed description of the 771. According to this reference book, the stockyard consists of a green- or gray-painted base fashioned out of sheet metal, yellow-painted fences (with either three or four railings), gates, a ramp made out of sheet metal, and a mat (black, tan, and white versions reported) that vibrated to move the eight miniature plastic cows that came packed with the 771.

Four of the cows have black bodies, and

four of them have brown ones; all eight of them come with white-painted heads. They move across the mat thanks to black, grayish, or reddish brushes affixed to the underside of their plastic stands.

There is also a brown-painted sheet-metal shed with yellow-painted windows and a plastic yellow-line window insert. The small structure has two simulated doors outlined in yellow. The lines can connect or remain separated. Finally, the shed boasts a green-painted sheet-metal roof known for its crackle finish.

Packed with every 771 is a plastic controller (black, gray, or white) that has a black rotary switch and a red button. The accessory, used in conjunction with a Flyer transformer, depends on a unit installed in the shed to activate the vibrating mat. Then the little livestock start moving.

Minor variations

The entry for the 771 in the Greenberg book lists several minor variations, all founded on different color combinations of the base, mat, and brushes. These variations do not affect the item's values.

The K771 was all but identical to the

771. The biggest difference was that the newcomer had a sheet-metal base painted blue. The vibrating mat came only in tan, and the plastic controller only in white.

When Gilbert abandoned three-digit product numbers in favor of five-digit ones in 1957, the operating stockyard was labeled as the 23771. In terms of its look and operation, however, nothing changed.

Greenberg's Pocket Price Guide to American Flyer, 1946-2023, values the 771 at \$44 in good condition and \$59 in excellent. The K771 is listed at \$50 and \$93, respectively; the 23771 at \$29 and \$113.

Personal memories

I remember how in 1958, when I was only 8 years old, I acquired a copy of the consumer folder for that year. There, a large group of accessories was depicted on an artist's conception of a "Dream" Layout. That was indeed a good choice of words, since I envisioned having that "Dream" Layout at our house!

The layout, packed with accessories, fascinated me. I liked the fact that it was set in a rural area (the only road shown was a gravel one), reminding me of where

I was growing up. Still, I couldn't figure out why the artist showed a Northern Pacific passenger train approaching three freight cars on a dead-end siding. I guess I wasn't supposed to notice! Otherwise, the picture was truly captivating to me.

My grandson is 8 years old, too, and he's as enamored with the stockyard as I was because it gives him more to do. After all, the cows don't always go right into the stockcar, so he often needs to "help" them.

Years ago, I adjusted my 771 by "ironing" the "feet" of the cows, as recommended in the 1954 edition of the *American Flyer Instruction Book*. As a result, the cattle went up the ramp and into the car perfectly. One person viewing my layout commented, "That's not realistic. Real cattle are not nearly that willing to go where you want them to." I had created a smooth operation, but I learned from a cattle farmer that it wasn't realistic! **CTD**

Accessory after accessory from the American Flyer catalog filled the rural railroad paradise depicted as a "Dream" Layout in a pamphlet for consumers offered in 1958.

Select Your Accessories from this AMERICAN FLYER "Dream" Layout!



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cover story

1 Was it possible to create an O gauge railroad whose detailed scenes would faithfully capture the sense of how it felt to grow up in the Midwest during the 1950s? Russ Boersma sought to do so on his 22 x 34-foot layout.



Traveling to the 1950s on an O gauge display

Time machine to



STORY BY ROGER CARP ● Photos by Dennis Brennan

a postwar world

The first thing O gauge modeler Russ Boersma does after you meet him and ask about his passion for Lionel trains is to carry you back in time to 1978. He must start there because that's when he rediscovered his boyhood engines and cars.

After traveling to 1978, Russ mentions a second incident of time travel. He talks about how he chanced upon objects wrapped in sections of the *Chicago Tribune* from May of 1958 when visiting his parents' home. Unwrapping them delicately, he quickly came face to face with his old Lionels.

The nicely preserved locomotives and rolling stock sparked an assortment of memories that moved Russ back to the late 1940s. He felt he

was attending elementary school and waiting for Christmas, when the trains reappeared after months in storage. The middle-aged Russ decided the trains wouldn't



**Russ Boersma
recalls building
a layout with
his father back
in the 1950s.**



2 What experience would you rather relive: Sitting in that Pontiac Safari station wagon or traveling on the Milwaukee Road's deluxe *Midwest Hiawatha* passenger train?

be packed up again. He had to give them a new home on a layout.

Powerful memories

Recollections of Russ' youth near Chicago came back. He thought of the Lionel trains, especially set No. 2131WS (a four-car work train led by a No. 726 Berkshire steam engine and whistle tender) he had received as a five-year-old in 1947.

Working alongside his dad, Russ helped build a Lionel layout on the surface of a ping-pong table. Key to its success was the pair of remote-control switches he got for Christmas a few years after his initial outfit arrived. No wonder Russ was the envy of his pals in the neighborhood.

When Russ entered high school, his family moved to a new home. That was when he and his dad wrapped up the



3 How many family dairy farms like this one, which in the 1950s could have been found everywhere in Illinois, still exist? The majority of them disappeared, just like the freight passing by with freshly painted New York Central F3s on the point.

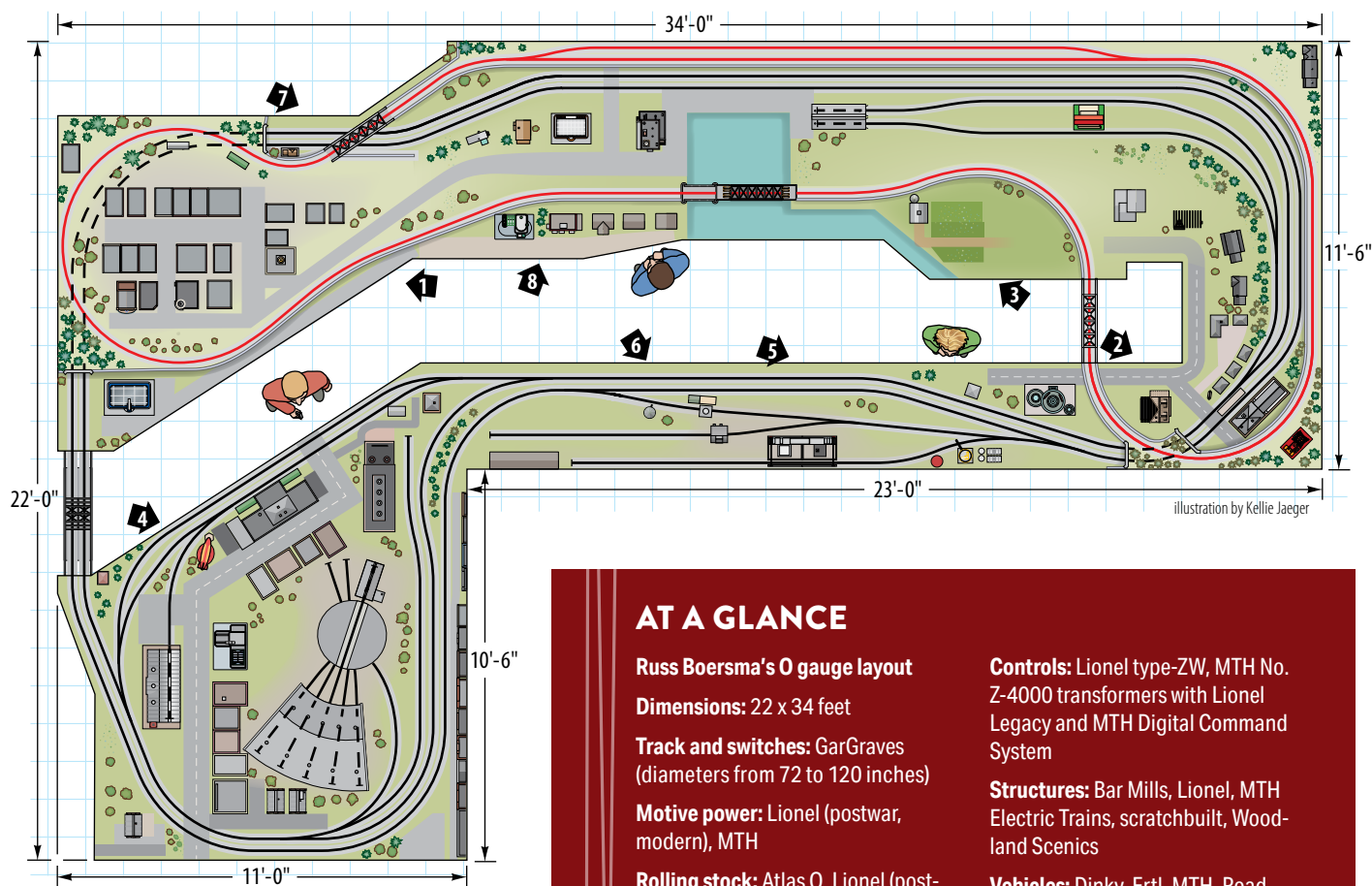


illustration by Kellie Jaeger

Beautifully designed vignettes of life in the 1950s distinguish Russ Boersma's layout. The numbered arrows correspond to the number in each of the captioned photographs.

AT A GLANCE

Russ Boersma's O gauge layout

Dimensions: 22 x 34 feet

Track and switches: GarGraves (diameters from 72 to 120 inches)

Motive power: Lionel (postwar, modern), MTH

Rolling stock: Atlas O, Lionel (postwar, modern), MTH, Williams

Accessories: Lionel (postwar, modern), MTH

Controls: Lionel type-ZW, MTH No. Z-4000 transformers with Lionel Legacy and MTH Digital Command System

Structures: Bar Mills, Lionel, MTH Electric Trains, scratchbuilt, Woodland Scenics

Vehicles: Dinky, Ertl, MTH, Road Champs, Solido

Figures: Lionel, MTH, Woodland Scenics

trains. They most likely intended to remove the items from their cocoons once the house was in order – but never did.

Finishing a dream

What Russ and his father had constructed on a well-used ping-pong table inspired the layout showcased here. Russ wished to develop a 22 x 34-foot display that would carry forward the hopes and plans that once motivated the two of them.

The new model railroad would pay tribute to the compact one built in the 1950s while also keeping alive what Russ remembered of his youth. He intended to find O gauge structures and details infused with postwar nostalgia so the layout could serve as a time machine. It would do for him what the DeLorean sports car immortalized in the movie *Back to the Future* did for many baby boomers.

Of course, this dream like many others required a solid foundation if it were to become a reality. For Russ, that meant assembling sturdy benchwork using 1 x 4 and 2 x 2 lumber. On top of 43"-high



4 Hot and tired travelers can hardly wait to climb aboard the air-conditioned *Texas Special* streamlined passenger train on a sultry afternoon in August back in the middle 1950s.



5 Steam engines, switch towers, and cabooses were ordinary sights in the 1950s, so Russ has made them prominent sights on his layout.

framework, he secured sheets of plywood purchased at a home-improvement center.

Once upon a time, Lionel tubular track impressed Russ as best. By the time he was ready to select straights and curves for this layout, he had learned about the benefits of GarGraves flextrack. The versatility and realism of that brand made it perfect in his eyes. Russ has never regretted that decision, especially after sprinkling Ballast King gravel over the ties for authenticity.

Scenes come alive

The scenes Russ had in mind would not be dependent on landscaping to have an impact on viewers. Towering mountains and expansive lakes, while absolutely stunning, were not essential to the miniature world he envisioned.

Rolling hills and narrow valleys amounted to all the natural effects Russ thought he needed to replicate. Sheets and chunks of Styrofoam could be put in place as the base of those landforms. Once appropriately covered, they got a coat or two of household latex paint. Shades of brown and green worked very well.

Then it was a matter of selecting the colors, textures, and types of commercial ground cover Russ believed would look just right. He studied all the promotional

literature put out by both Scenic Express and Woodland Scenics so he could find exactly what he preferred. Some natural stones went on to finish certain areas.

Structures were key

Vignettes characterizing life as Russ remembered it from postwar Chicago and surrounding communities dominate the

new layout. For them to work visually and thematically, he needed to locate and purchase the most interesting and evocative structures, vehicles, and figures and use them all in highly imaginative ways.

Russ picked out terrific commercial buildings and accessories marketed by Lionel, MTH, and Woodland Scenics. He even tried making a few structures from



6 With foresight and skill Russ has combined Lionel postwar items, notably a No. 622 Santa Fe switcher and an operating culvert loader, with newer locomotives and industrial structures.

scratch and reported being pleased with the results. Light weathering also worked.

Thick sheets of cardboard painted the color of concrete looked great as roadways. To simulate asphalt, Russ painted the sections black with white lines.

Thoughtfully arranging models of vintage automobiles, trucks, and buses on the streets and highways improved urban and suburban sites. More important were the figures from Lionel, MTH, and Woodland Scenics thoughtfully added.

Before Russ even knew it, he was putting the final touches on industrial districts, residential neighborhoods, and commercial sections reminiscent of what he had seen during his boyhood. He enjoyed showing everything to his wife, Naomi, and sharing stories about what life had been like back then.

Petroleum refineries and steel mills served by Lionel trains capture the attention of every visitor. But then folks catch sight of the diners, grocery stores, motels, and railroad stations on the layout and have reason to share their own tales of life where and when they came of age. The layout becomes their time machine.

Still planning

Gazing at the 22 x 34-foot O gauge empire filling his comfortable train room, Russ

sees no purpose in making any wholesale changes in the coming years. He is more than satisfied with how his railroad looks and operates. "I spent so much time making plans and preparations," he says, "that it really ought to be just right."

Even so, as new structures hit the market and Russ keeps evaluating the scenes, he imagines modifying certain areas. His talent for incorporating toy-like accessories into realistic landscapes should only get better, particularly if he continues to

rethink what he has accomplished and refine different techniques.

For the present, operating his postwar and modern-era trains should keep Russ occupied and content. He says the most pleasure comes when he can switch rolling stock on the elevated section and get his accessories going strong. But the man whose layout harkens back to the 1950s can't help looking into the future, wondering how it might change, and inviting us to return fairly soon. **CTT**



7 Beautiful Kansas City Southern F3 cab units move through the truss bridge in May of 1958, about when the newspapers used to wrap Russ's boyhood trains were being printed.



8 The train rumbling by with trailers on its flatcars reminds folks inside Betty's Diner to hold on to their shaking cups of coffee.

SPOTLIGHT ON LIONEL'S No. 6464-25 Great Northern boxcar



This classic O gauge model has neat variations

STORY BY JOE ALGOZZINI AND ROGER CARP ● Photos by William Zuback

The toy train world took a tremendous step forward exactly 70 years ago when Lionel brought out the first entries in its classic No. 6464 series of near-scale boxcars. Four attractive models, each decorated with the name of a notable regional railroad, made their debut as set components and separate-sale items. Lionel fans immediately took notice.

The No. 6464-25 Great Northern boxcar, while of interest to collectors and operator of postwar Lionel trains, has often been overshadowed by its more renowned peers from 1953, in particular the No. 6464-1 Western Pacific.

However, careful research suggests that enthusiasts should pay more attention to it, especially because there are more variations than generally acknowledged, definitely more than the dull and glossy versions widely known.





The No. 6464-25 Great Northern was one of four near-scale boxcars Lionel introduced 70 years ago to launch its highly collectible series. The orange-painted model with white heat-stamped graphics appeared in two sets and was available for sale in 1953 and 1954.

The Great Northern

The 6464-25 was the second numerically listed boxcar in the landmark 6464 series developed by Lionel. The car used a Type I body shell (10 1/2" long) painted orange. White graphics, including the name and herald of the Great Northern, were heat-stamped on both sides. Single-block doors painted the same shade of orange were added, as was a small metal brake wheel. Finally, Lionel installed bar-end trucks with knuckle couplers.

The Great Northern boxcar was packed in O gauge outfit No. 2203WS (a four-car freight set led a No. 681 6-8-6 Turbine with a No. 2046WX tender) and could be purchased by itself for \$5.50 (\$57.91 in today's dollars).

Lionel reissued the 6464-25 in 1954, again offering it for separate sale at the same price and using it in one outfit. That set was an O-27 entry, the No. 1515WS (a five-car freight set headed by a No. 2065 4-6-4 small Hudson with a No. 2046W whistle tender).

The 6464-25 was dropped from the product line for 1955 and never returned.

Consumer catalogs

Now that we've outlined the basic information about the 6464-25, let's delve into its background, with emphasis on how the Great Northern car and two of its peers from 1953 were depicted in the full-color catalog made available to consumers in the autumn. We'll skip over the black-and-white advance catalog issued early in 1953 because its illustrations of the 6464 boxcars failed to show how the cars ultimately were decorated.

The consumer catalog depicted the 6464-1 only as a component of O-27 outfit No. 1505WS. In the artwork of that four-car freight set, the Western Pacific boxcar appeared more as a white model and less as the silver-painted model produced.

Lionel's consumer catalog for 1953 depicted the No. 6464-50 Minneapolis & St. Louis only as a component of O gauge outfit No. 2201WS. In the artwork of that four-car freight set, the boxcar appeared as a green model and not as the Tuscan Red model being produced.

The consumer catalog did capture the look of the 6464-25 as it was manufactured. The key discrepancy with the artwork of set 2203WS was that the orange Great Northern was shown with black lettering and a white herald and not the white lettering being used.

Flipping to the back pages of the consumer catalog where items sold by themselves were depicted and described, we find only the Great Northern among the four boxcars, even though all of them were available at \$5.50 each. The 6464-25 was again shown as an orange model with (incorrect) black lettering and the familiar white herald.

Oddly enough, the list of 6464 boxcars in the separate-sale section placed both the Western Pacific and the Minneapolis

& St. Louis ahead of the Great Northern, which didn't arrange them in correct numerical order based on their suffixes. Maybe Lionel did so to emphasize that modelers could buy boxcars that were not being shown.

What those details about artwork in the consumer catalog suggested is that Lionel might have already locked into the design of the Great Northern by that time, even though illustrations and other information about the 6464 boxcars was still being gathered. Final decisions about the Western Pacific and the Minneapolis & St. Louis could still have been pending.

Of course, when the consumer catalog for the next year was released in the fall of 1954, illustrations of all three of those boxcars in the separate-sale section aligned with the models being produced. In fact, despite the fact that only the 6464-25 and 6464-50 were being used in cataloged outfits, depictions of them with their sets were accurate.

Body types

The 6464-25 Great Northern, like the other three near-scale boxcars manufactured in 1953, used what collectors refer to as a Type I body shell. However, some of the earliest examples of the 6464-1 have ribs on the underside of the roof on their body shells.

This detail enables us to conclude the Western Pacific was not only first in the 6464 series, but was also chosen by company designers as the first 6464 to experiment with. Those engineers did so until finally selecting a smooth interior roof design. It became the rule for all 6464 boxcars, including all the 6464-25 Great Northern cars.

When developing the next group of 6464 boxcars for the 1954 production year,



Examples of the Great Northern car with decals over the white herald were not original Lionel postwar production. A collector fabricated them many years later. As for the Western Pacific boxcars, their graphics were added over unmarked orange shells.



engineers recognized the need to eliminate a row of rivets on the right side of the body shell. Doing so would make it much easier to apply the graphics required for the new boxcars in the space now left open. This change created the Type II body shell.

Lionel did not introduce a new mold or tooling change for a particular item or series until it had completed the previous production numbers. That way, supervisors knew in advance the previous run of models would be manufactured properly as before. Once that production run was completed, Lionel could start tinkering with the new, “modified” mold until, it too, was done correctly, and ready to be boxed and sold.

Apparently, Lionel was still using the Western Pacific and the Minneapolis & St. Louis heat stamps when the boxcar mold was modified. As a result, a few of each were manufactured with this new Type II body shell, as Lionel experimented with this change by using items already being used in production.

Production of the 6464-25s was already completed by then, and Lionel was no longer using the Great Northern heat stamps. That explained why, unlike the 6464-1 and 6464-50, no examples of the 6464-25 have been reported with Type II shells.

Plastic and paint

For boxcars made in 1953, Lionel used injection-molded plastic before applying the predetermined color of paint. Shells have been reported as being clear, black, and a blend of whatever color of plastic was being molded at that time. Therefore,

the color of paint covering the shells can look different, depending on the color of the plastic.

In addition, the paint Lionel purchased and used on the 6464 boxcars can vary. Reputable variations of the Western Pacific, Great Northern, and Minneapolis & St. Louis cars have been documented with dull and glossy shades of the same paint. Some collectors take things further and report light, medium, and dark variations of the paint.

Generally speaking, the 6464-25 Great Northern is known for having only two variations, and they’re based on dull or glossy finishes of orange paint.

Decals came later

Collectors familiar with the 6464-25 may have seen scarce examples of the Great Northern that have a small decal placed over the white herald showing the mountain goat. They wonder whether such models were originally decorated by Lionel and may go out of their way to find them and then pay a lot of money for what they think is a rare boxcar.

Sorry to disillusion you, but 6464-25 Great Northern boxcars with fancy decals never came out of the Lionel factory. They were made up by the late Joe Ranker, a well-known collector, just so he had something different to sell at train shows and get rid of excess inventory.

Besides using the brand-new No. 6464-25 as a component of an O gauge outfit in 1953, Lionel offered it as well as the three other new boxcars for separate sale at \$5.50 each. Artwork for the Great Northern car nearly captured the look of the actual model – only the black lettering departed from reality.

Speaking of excess inventory, Lionel did end up with more orange-painted boxcar shells than it could use. It sold the extras to Madison Hardware Co. in New York City. That famous Lionel retailer then moved the undecorated bodies to dealers and collectors, who were free to add whatever decorative elements they chose.

One example came to light when collector Mike Toth shared a No. 6464-75 Rock Island boxcar. It had been painted green over a clear plastic body shell that had first been painted orange, most likely for a 6464-25 Great Northern.

Have fun

If you now own a dull and a glossy Great Northern boxcar and want more variations, try looking for one whose shell has the small raised mark indicative of the roof nick accidentally cut into the tooling late in 1953.

You can also hunt for a factory error. Maybe a 6464-25 with double-stamped

lettering or one missing part of the heat-stamped graphics. Or with a noticeable difference in the amount of white paint used on the herald.

One other variation related to the 6464-25 has to do with its orange-and-blue component box. Lionel must have fallen short of properly printed boxes because it did an “on-line fix.” Boxes for the 6464-1 had “Western Pacific” blackened out and “25” rubber-stamped to the right or left of Lionel. Then Great Northern boxcars were popped right inside.

Just as popular *Classic Toy Trains* contributor Lou Palumbo always writes very eloquently at the conclusion of his regular column: “Keep searchin.” **CTT**

The authors wish to thank Joe Henley, Mike Toth, Dale Ferguson, and the late Gary Spear for information shared.

**OF COURSE,
WHEN THE CON-
SUMER CATALOG
FOR THE NEXT
YEAR WAS
RELEASED IN THE
FALL OF 1954,
ILLUSTRATIONS
OF ALL THREE OF
THOSE BOXCARS
IN THE SEPARATE-
SALE SECTION
ALIGNED WITH
THE MODELS
BEING PRODUCED.**

An extraordinary engine from 1915

Rare model from a world's fair sells for \$105,000!

STORY BY ROGER CARP



The editorial and art teams that are responsible for *Classic Toy Trains* have had locomotives on our minds for the past couple of months, ever since we decided to make the greatest Standard, O, and S gauge engines of the past 125 years the theme of our next special-interest publication. *Great Toy Train Locomotives*, as we've named the 100-page special issue with newly written articles about 40 models, will be available in October of this year.

Responsibility for the prewar and post-war sections has been handed to me, and I have been busy discussing with my colleagues and contributors which locomotives to include. One prewar beauty that has long impressed me is the No. 2500 Pacific made by Voltamp, a firm based in Baltimore. The 4-6-2, cast from iron and then painted black with Baltimore & Ohio graphics, was manufactured and sold throughout the 1910s to operate using household electric current on the 2"-wide two-rail tracks the company sold.

Voltamp was asked to develop a unique version of its Pacific and tender, along with a pair of refrigerator cars and a caboose, for a world's fair held in San Francisco from February through December of 1915. Known as the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, the pageant served to commemorate the completion of

the Panama Canal the previous year. Unofficially, it announced to the United States and beyond that San Francisco had truly recovered from the terrible earthquake and fire that had devastated the city nine years before.

The building highlighting various technological and economic achievements of the host state of California included a historic full-size train (the first steam locomotive purchased by the Southern Pacific) and an operating model railroad created by Voltamp.

Motive power for the miniature freight and passenger trains consisted of early, "high cab" versions of the Pacific and a "tank" tender specially lettered for the Southern Pacific. Among the pieces of rolling stock were two yellow-painted refrigerator cars fabricated out of sheet steel and lettered for Pacific Fruit Express. Each of the striking reefers was given a unique road number. A red-painted SP caboose finished the freight.

According to available sources of information,

Voltamp Electric Manufacturing Co. made cast-iron models of Baltimore & Ohio steam engines in the 1910s to run over 2"-wide two-rail track. This No. 2500 4-6-2 Pacific and its "tank" tender, specially lettered for the Southern Pacific, pulled cars at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915. Photo courtesy Stout Auctions

the Voltamp trains went from the exposition to the homes of fortunate individuals. They remained the property of those men and their families, changing hands only occasionally over succeeding generations.

In April of 2023, one of the Voltamp Pacifics, a pair of refrigerator cars, and the caboose were offered by Stout Auctions. Prices realized (excluding the buyer's premium) were \$6,800 and \$7,500 for the reefers and \$8,100 for the caboose. As for the engine and its tender, when the hammer went down to signify the end of the bidding, the price for the unique combination had reached \$105,000 – and unquestionably worth every penny. **CTT**



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SMALL SCENES, BIG IMPACT

9 simple projects add next-level detail to your layout

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOHN HUDAK

As a child I was never fortunate enough to visit the Lionel New York showroom layout in the 1950s. However, I've enjoyed the photos of it in *Classic Toy Trains'* special-interest publication *Lionel Showroom Layouts* (available as a digital download from Kalmbachhobbystore.com). I was impressed with the small details added to the layout to increase its realistic look.

The good thing is it wasn't at a level that was hard to duplicate. The layout still had the toy train look that could be easily reproduced by an adult or youngster.

The following photos illustrate a few detail projects I've added to my O gauge layout. Maybe they will inspire you to add some new things to look at on your home display, just as Lionel's did for me.

I enjoy these simple projects that improve my layout while keeping the post-war Lionel look. A layout is never finished, and these types of projects are a good way to keep actively enhancing your layout. Try some of your own. **CTT**



I painted a Plasticville watchman's crossing shanty with the Lionel brown, white, and green color scheme. I added some scribed siding to the base to simulate wood planking. Then I installed an interior light and one over the porch. A railroad figure finishes the look.



My engine-servicing area needed some fuel facilities. I built two tanks from a Plastruct oil tank kit and painted them black. I added a Lionel semaphore ladder (part no. 151-22) that I painted yellow.



I illuminated the Lionel milk car stand with two vintage postwar (non-Lionel) gooseneck lamps I found on eBay. I wired them in parallel and installed two screw terminals to make it a self-contained unit.



I used an American Flyer No. 585 Tool Shed as a baggage-freight shed next to a Lionel No. 115 City Station. The red roofs are a good match. I added interior lighting, a ramp, some freight, and a few figures to complete the scene. Note the cab drivers ignoring passengers.



A couple of Lionel barrels that I painted black and then placed on a rack made from stripwood or plastic turned out to be a simple detail to add along a right-of-way or by any sort of structure. Acrylic paints purchased at a crafts store worked great for the job.



A Plasticville cattle-loading pen and a Lionel No. 37914 Work House combined to make a simple cattle watering and rest area for stock-cars. A Plasticville hobo shack would also work nicely.



A fire hydrant and an oil drum rack (both Lionel parts) add interest to this scene at my enginehouse. Check your spare parts box for items you may already have to draw attention to a scene.



Plastruct stairs and railings are used to fabricate ladder stands for the engine-servicing facility. They can be picked up and then moved into position when locomotives come in for service.



A Lionel horizontal fuel tank was painted black to give it a more post-war look. Dark colors mute the details, blending them into the overall scene. Consider your palette and what you want to emphasize.

It's autumn every day on this O gauge layout

STORY BY ROGER CARP ● Photos by Walt Urban Jr.

Each of the four seasons has its own wondrous qualities, which is why O and S gauge model railroads vary in the time of the year they're set. Winter, with snow and decorated evergreens, appeals to many layout builders; other hobbyists prefer the lush trees and sparkling waters representative of late spring or the middle of summer. There are several advantages to emphasizing any of these three seasons.

For O gauger Walt Urban Jr., though, autumn is the time he enjoys most. Sure, he likes a brisk walk outdoors with his wife, Jackie, when the temperature dips below freezing in the winter. And Walt can be found on the patio grilling seafood during the summer when their adult children, Ken and Wendy, visit.

But when it came time to settle on the look of his 12½ x 16-foot three-rail display, Walt entertained not a single doubt that it would reflect the beauty of fall.

How Walt created so evocative an O gauge railroad has much to teach his peers. He offers insights into the methods and materials he relied on to form an impressive mountain covered with colorful brush that causes visitors to bundle up as though it's early November. Add in the Lionel engines and rolling stock from postwar days he operates, and you have one terrific and satisfying layout.

Strange initials

When conversing with Walt about the two-level railroad filling his train room, he starts referring to it by initials. "I call my

layout the HK&WU," he quickly says and gently advises any visitors not to forget it.

Luckily for perplexed listeners, Walt clarifies the matter promptly. "I named my layout after the two family members who were most responsible for my entering the hobby and finding pleasure in it when I was a youngster right through the present. I have in mind my Uncle Henry and my father."

Still in need of a further hint or two, Walt finishes by stating, "The initials come from Henry Krajewski and Walter Urban Sr. My dad gave me a Lionel No. 681 Turbine and some freight cars for Christmas of 1954.

Every year after that, he put together a 4 x 8-foot platform under our family's tree. My uncle, who worked for years for the

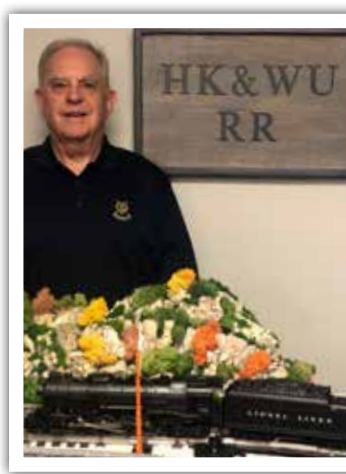
Pennsylvania RR as an electrician, always helped us with the wiring."

Later, Walt recalls, a move to a new residence enabled him to develop a 6 x 8-foot layout for his Lionel roster of motive power, rolling stock, and accessories. To that world, he decided to improve the look of the tubular track with wood ties while trying his hand at landscaping various areas. While still a teenager, he fashioned trees out of lichen and roads out of sandpaper. A promising beginning to a lifelong commitment to more realistic modeling.

Time to focus

Not surprisingly, that promising beginning ran into a few of what might charitably be designated "barriers." Namely, Walt interrupted his enjoyment of Lionel trains with attending college, serving in the military, marrying, raising two children, and pursuing a successful and meaningful career. Not until almost 30 years had gone by did he feel ready and eager to blast through those obstacles.

Walt's return to the hobby in the 1990s involved attending train shows, buying Lionel items from the postwar



Walt named his 12½ x 16-foot home layout the HK&WU RR to honor his uncle and his father, because they introduced him to the hobby of O gauge railroading.



1 The orange, yellow, tan, and magenta clumps of lichen bursting forth amid the rockwork on Walt Urban Jr.'s O gauge layout leave no doubt autumn has arrived. Racing out of the tunnel are a couple of his favorites – Lionel No. 2343 Santa Fe F3 A units.



2 Besides the main level that stands 35 inches off the floor, Walt's impressive home layout has an elevated line another 7 inches higher. He used the Pennsy Stone Block Flexi-Wall System marketed by Scenic Express for the impressive system of walls you see.

era, and refreshing his skills at laying track and making scenery on another 6 x 8-foot layout. Feeling pretty good about how much fun he was having in the hobby, he prepared for the next step.

After moving to a new house where there was ample space for a three-rail display, Walt announced to Jackie that he wanted to construct a more ambitious railroad with the dual purposes of honoring the memory of his dad and uncle and exhibiting talents he had been refining for years. She told him to do whatever he wanted, thrilled to watch her husband feel so very engaged and enthusiastic.

Thus emerged the eye-catching layout showcasing classic Lionel steam and diesel engines, freight and passenger cars, and accessories, plus a host of structures from the postwar line of Plasticville U.S.A. kits.

Basic facts

Let's establish a few basic facts about the 12½ x 16-foot railroad before moving on to the wonderful autumn scenery that gives it beauty and character.

First, Walt relied heavily on tabletop

construction, with pieces of 2 x 4 lumber serving as legs to support the primary level, which consists of 4 x 8-foot sheets of ¾-inch-thick plywood. Over that platform he erected a second level from slightly thinner plywood; 1 x 4 furring strips of wood served as its foundation. He also incorporated shelves below on which he plans to store rolling stock and set boxes.

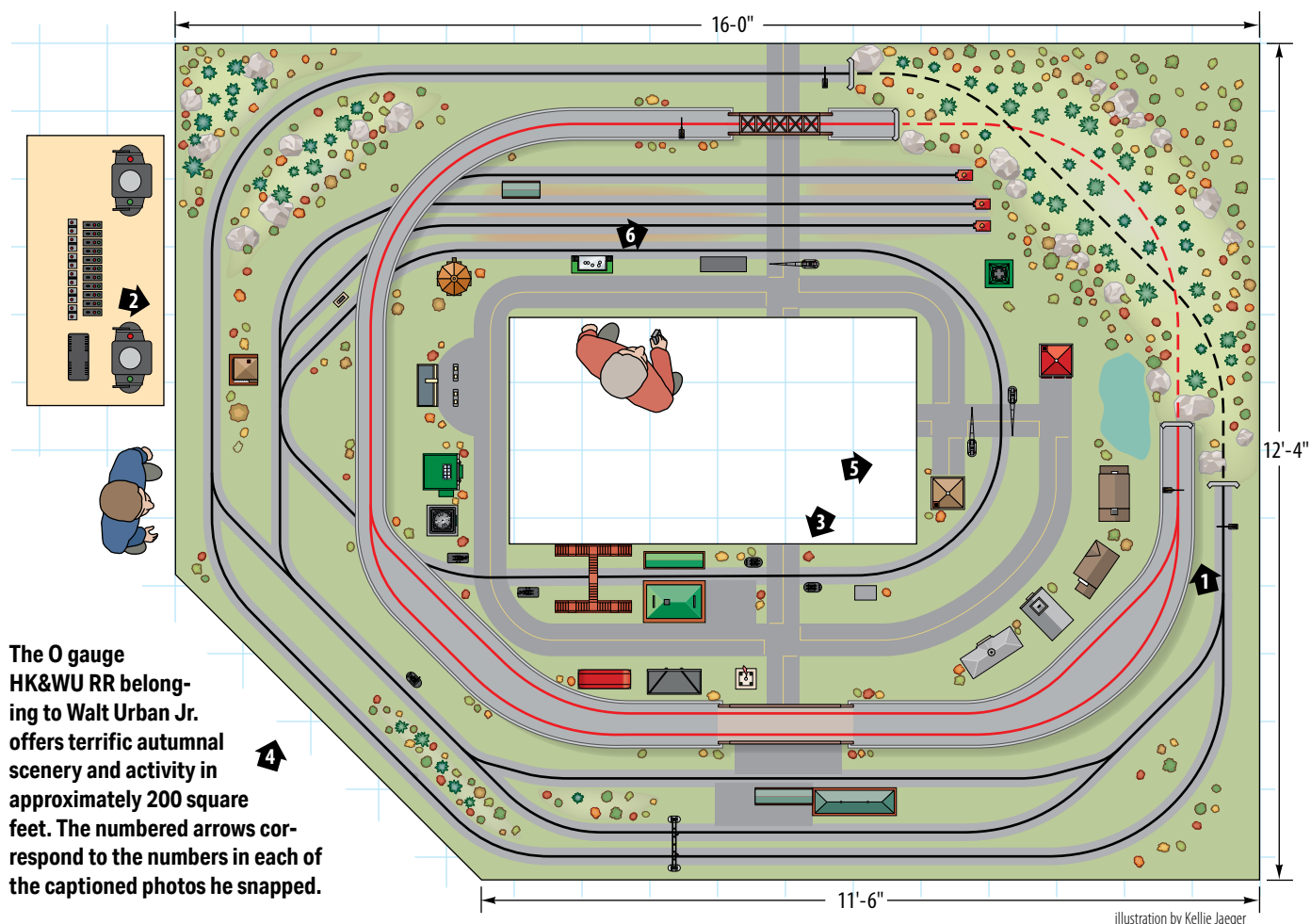
Second, Walt assembled the 35-inch-high platform with screws. He added that the benchwork was designed after the track plan to ensure everything would fit as desired without looking cramped or any areas ending up being inaccessible.

Third, Walt refused to quit going with traditional tubular track. However, to enhance its appearance, he inserted hundreds of wood ties under the sheet-metal rails. He laid the straight and curved sections on roadbed from Woodland Scenics. Once everything was finished, he poured coarse light gray ballast on the main lines and medium brown ballast by the sidings.

Fourth, because Lionel remote-control switches left over from Walt's childhood still worked dependably, he decided to trust them on his new layout. In a handful of locations, he bought newer and wider turnouts. Ironically, the old-timers worked better than their younger cousins. Walt figured there was a lesson there somewhere! As for operation of the switches, he went with fixed-voltage plugs and the vintage red/green bulb controllers originally packed with them.

Familiar electronics

Some toy train enthusiasts face matters of wiring a layout with trepidation if not outright panic. Not Walt! Trained by his beloved uncle on the intricacies of electronics, he had put that superlative training into practice as an adolescent and so believed he could handle again whatever he needed to know to install operating signals and other postwar accessories as well as the transformers of his choosing.



3 While handsome Lionel Santa Fe F3 A and B units from the postwar era navigate the upper level of the layout, a modern-era Western Maryland NW2 diesel switcher (Lionel No. 18501) pushes a No. 3662 automatic milk car right by a Plasticville U.S.A. station.

AT A GLANCE

Walt Urban Jr.'s HK&WU RR

Gauge: O

Dimensions: 12½ x 16 feet

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

Motive power: Lionel (postwar, modern)

Rolling stock: Lionel (postwar, modern)

Controls: Lionel type-ZW transformers (2)

Accessories: Lionel (postwar, modern)

Structures: MTH, Plasticville

Vehicles: Lionel



4 The Lionel No. 682 Pennsylvania RR steam turbine and tender and No. 2340 Pennsy GG1 electric-profile locomotive look as though they were just purchased. Their paint, lettering, and other details seem as nice as when they left the Lionel plant.

Asked about powering the layout, Walt said that vintage transformers handled everything on his conventionally controlled empire. Two type-ZWs from the top of Lionel's catalogs of the 1950s helped him keep alive the feel of the time when he was coming of age in Philadelphia.

Walt soldered 16-gauge stranded wire for power buses to connect the track to the transformers. "I took care," he said, "to maintain polarity by using the same outer rail for the common connection throughout the main and elevated sections."

Slightly thinner 18-gauge stranded wire worked for connecting all the different accessories. Anything thicker, Walt mentioned, proved difficult when it came time to squeeze several lines into one of the clips on the base, with a Lionel No. 450 signal bridge being the obvious example of such a problem. He used the same gauge for feeder wires soldered to the main lines throughout the layout.



5 The lake Walt fashioned at the foot of his massive mountain comes alive from this angle. The Plasticville Fire Department can handle any emergency on the layout.

A massive mountain

Visitors always quiz Walt on how he built the massive mountain. He replies that he first made a framework out of cardboard “corners” used to protect pieces of furniture during shipping. He cut them up into desired shapes and secured them using hot glue. From there, he covered them with wire mesh from window screens, which he secured to the plywood base with staples.

Next, Walt taped wads of newspaper to the screening, followed by layer after layer of plaster-infused cloth. Now he had a solid yet unfinished shell.

While everything dried, Walt focused on rocks, which he cast by pouring Hydrocal into commercial molds. And not just a handful! He made hundreds of rocks, using a mere three molds, each consisting of several shapes and sizes.

Placing miniature boulders and outcroppings consumed Walt. Only after doing so was he ready to color everything

using earth-colored liquid pigments bought from Woodland Scenics.

Grass, foliage, and other types of ground cover went on next to make the mountain look even better. Walt slathered on diluted white glue first and then quickly sprinkled on the vegetation. Once finished with that artistic process, he sprayed on Matte Medium Transparent Scenery Cement from Scenic Express.

Final touches involved “planting” commercial trees as well as assorted sizes of lichen in a rainbow of colors. Those landscaping elements transformed the summery look into autumn, all done to please Walt and the onlookers.

Ready to play

After completing the mountain and adding a small lake nearby, Walt told Jackie he believed he had entered the last stages of construction. He used black foamboard to make the different streets, highways, and

driveways. Pieces of white foamboard served as the sidewalks. “Foamboard is fairly easy to work with,” he said, “and can be cut with a sharp utility knife.”

Then came the fun of adding the old Plasticville structures. Walt also hunted for a few desirable ones he had missed long ago, notably the police department, bank, and gasoline station, and then situated them in his little communities.

The realistic landscapes, the vintage operating accessories, and the toy-like buildings and elevations blend beautifully to create a wonderland capturing the appearance of what Lionel during postwar days hoped its biggest fans would build at home. The tubular track and ZW transformers augment the vintage aura.

Now Walt felt ready to enjoy his tribute to the two gentlemen who initiated him into the world of O gauge railroading. He knows in his heart that his dad and uncle would approve of what he has done. **CTT**



6 Ever since Walt got started building layouts with his dad and uncle as a boy in the 1950s, he has improved the look of his tubular track by inserting stained wood ties under the rails. These days, he also adds various colors of commercial ballast to achieve greater realism.



SCARCE &
UNKNOWN

SPECIALS FROM MTA

This collectors organization created highly desirable items

STORY BY MIKE STELLA ● Photos by Mike Bloom

Interest in the near-scale boxcars included in Lionel's postwar-era No. 6464 series never flags. Newcomers to the ranks of collectors continue to discover the 29 cataloged entries and start tracking down examples to display. Longtime hobbyists pursue hard-to-find variations while engaging in conversations about the models and their original boxes with other equally passionate enthusiasts.



The Model Train Association, a group of toy train collectors and operators, did much to promote the hobby in southern California.

Among versions attracting attention are the special ones created by Lionel for the Train Collectors Association to sell as fund-raisers at its 1967 national convention in Baltimore. What made the leftover inventory of boxcars decorated for nine railroads stand out was the shiny brass door used to replace one of the regular plastic ones. The doorplates had the name and logo of the TCA and were printed with information about the convention.

A different group of special Lionel models somewhat similar in appearance has tended to be ignored and undervalued. It's time, therefore, to turn our attention to the unique pieces of O gauge rolling stock made for the Model Train Association.

■ **Breaking away**

Decades of involvement in the toy train hobby in southern California have shown me how the community of collectors here always had a well-deserved reputation for independence. In the mid-1950s, individuals such as John Parker and Ward Kimball paved the way for the Train Collectors Association to be established.

A little more than decade after the founding of the TCA in 1954, a group of toy train collectors and operators decided the time was ripe to launch an organization with roots in southern California. Led by Bill Harris, they announced the formation of the Toy Train Operating Society in 1966. Soon, the TTOS was holding meets and publishing newsletters and a superb monthly publication.

Before long, a few avid TTOS members were expressing dissatisfaction with the organization and its officers. Led by Art Brannick, they gathered in 1968 in Whittier, a community east of Los Angeles, to

establish yet another body, which they named the Model Train Association.

The MTA remained strong throughout southern California for most of the next half-century. There were, according to Mike, several hundred dues-paying members. The MTA regularly held swap meets and annual get-togethers known as Roundhouses, even though it hardly spread beyond Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties. Members had good times and met often to share knowledge and promote the hobby.

■ **Special cars**

A year after the MTA was started, some of the bigwigs put their heads together to figure out a way to raise money. Aware perhaps of what their peers had been doing at the TCA, they concluded a specially decorated 6464 boxcar might bring in needed cash.

Instead of working directly with Lionel, however, leaders of the MTA simply drove to local hobby shops, where they purchased many of the No. 6464-500 Timken models brought back to the cataloged lineup for 1969. They had the boxcars altered with the addition to the door on each side of a small metal sign whose lettering read: "M.T.A. Roundhouse 1969."

Most of the Timken boxcars came equipped with die-cast metal bar-end trucks with tab knuckle couplers. A small quantity were originally given the elaborate die-cast metal trucks Lionel generally installed on O-27 streamlined passenger cars from the 1950s as well as on the No. 6517 Lionel Lines bay-window caboose cataloged from 1955 through 1959.

A gap of several years followed between the time the Timken boxcars were marketed and when the MTA introduced its next special car. As I remember the events, members once more went out to buy many of the No. 9230 Monon single-door boxcar. They substituted a brass-plated sliding

door for one of the regular plastic ones. On it was printed the name of the organization, the part number associated with the shiny door, and "Roundhouse 1977" to mark the occasion.

Year after year, the MTA went on releasing a small number of modified Lionel models (six, according to my memory. Among them was the No. 9747 Chesapeake & Ohio double-

door automobile boxcar from 1978. The replacement doors carried the usual information and declared the MTA to be "The Friendly Club." Maybe the wording represented a subtle dig at the TCA and TTOS.

Finally in 1986, the MTA made available its tenth car, a red bobber caboose with a large gleaming panel spread across most of the side, heralding the 10th Anniversary Roundhouse being held on May 24, 1986. The model, while cute and colorful, plainly was not from the Lionel line.

The little caboose brought everything to an end. The Model Train Association went on, and more of the annual get-togethers were scheduled, but there were no more models from any manufacturer that were fancied up with brass-plated doors or metal signs. Too bad, since they looked so nice and proved to be desirable. Now, collectors keep hunting for them. **CTT**

AWARE PERHAPS OF WHAT THEIR PEERS HAD BEEN DOING AT THE TCA, THEY CONCLUDED A SPECIALLY DECORATED 6464 BOX-CAR MIGHT BRING IN NEEDED CASH.

The MTA models included a Lionel No. 6464-500 Timken near-scale boxcar offered in 1969 with small metal signs on each door.



WITH THE CTT STAFF



The Union Pacific Heritage Fleet paint schemes shine on the latest run of Lionel Legacy SD70ACes.

Lionel Legacy SD70ACe

UP Heritage Fleet liveries highlight the offerings in this run

Locomotives from the Union Pacific Heritage Fleet highlight the latest release of the Lionel Legacy SD70ACe. The product was announced in the 2022 Volume 2 catalog.

The model train maker offered 10 versions, and I was convinced I needed at least half of them.

Lionel has not produced the UP heritage units in 15 years, and who knows when we will ever see them offered again (which is part of the excuse I used to get my wife's approval on buying all these).

Detail changes

Lionel has made minor changes to the appearance of these O gauge engines since their initial release, such as the metallic paint used on the fuel tanks and trucks.

The most notable updates can't be seen, but most certainly can be heard! The prime-mover sounds add a level of realism that simply wasn't present in O scale model railroading years ago. The deep

bass and hum from these units are enough to make you feel like you're running a real railroad and need to stick to a schedule.

Checking the details

These engines measure 19 inches long and have all the Legacy features, including ElectroCouplers at both ends, fan-driven smoke, a metal frame, CrewTalk, variable horn and bell effects, and engineer and conductor figures in the cab.

They also have road name-specific detailing. The most obvious of these are the antennas and air-conditioning units on top of the cabs.

Units can be run in Legacy or Train-Master command control mode or conventionally with a standard transformer.

In addition to the heritage units, Lionel offered two Montana Rail Link SD70ACes (a "Thank You Essential Workers" and a "Thank You Veterans" unit), along with one marked for Progress Rail (PRLX) in Chesapeake & Ohio paint.

Montana Rail link is a road name that is seldom offered by Lionel, so the second I saw it in the catalog I knew those engines were coming to my house.

For me, what makes models like these important are the striking colors. Coming across a standard UP unit is quite common and won't draw too much attention on a layout. However, a heritage unit is attention-grabbing right out of the box!

Before I review a model, I like to test it for a few weeks in every configuration possible. I can confirm these engines look good not only leading a train but also on the end of one serving as a DPU (Distributed Power Unit).

Nothing looks as good as having modern heritage SD70ACe power pulling a long intermodal consist with a hard-working heritage unit to punctuate the train.

How can you pick?

When it comes to colorful engines like these, I often run into the problem of



Also offered in this run are special Montana Rail Link schemes: "Thank you Essential Workers" and "Thank You Veterans."

deciding which one is my true favorite. At first, I was certain the Rio Grande had my heart, until I unboxed the UP No. 1988 in the Missouri-Kansas-Texas eritage scheme. Its captivating paint is unlike any other I have on my home layout. The numbers on these big engines reflect when the railroad was merged into the UP.

Picking the best from this assortment is hard! My opinion may have changed by the time you're reading this review.

Everyone should have at least one of the colorful Lionel SD70ACE road diesels on their roster. They operate with minimum O-36 curves, so there are no excuses. Miss out now, and I guarantee you will pay well above MSRP on eBay by the end of the year! – Benjamin Laremont, YouTube: Ben's Trains

Legacy SD70ACE by Lionel

MSRP: \$649.99

Features: ElectroCouplers on both ends; O-36 operation; fan-driven smoke unit with adjustable output; LED headlights with directional lighting; Illuminated number boards; lighted cab interior; die-cast metal trucks, pilot, and fuel tank; metal frame; engineer and conductor figures.

Road names: Union Pacific Rio Grande Heritage No. 1989 (No. 2333200); UP M-K-T Heritage No. 1988 (2333210); UP Missouri Pacific Heritage No. 1982 (2333220); UP Chicago & North Western Heritage No. 1995 (2333190); UP Southern Pacific Heritage No. 1996 (2333230); UP Western Pacific Heritage No. 1983 (2333240); Montana Rail Link Essential Workers No. 4404 (2333160); MRL Veterans No. 4407; PRLX (Progress Rail) No. 4834 (2333180)

Website: lionel.com



MTH's Baldwin VO1000 is no lightweight – it weighs almost 4 pounds! This O gauge model is a smooth runner that's handy for yard work or branchline switching duties.

The MTH Baldwin VO1000 is a solid switcher

The MTH Baldwin VO1000 switcher has arrived. This Premier line model was announced in mid-April 2022.

It's a solid locomotive for any size O gauge layout with wonderfully details and features. It's not uncommon for MTH to put smaller locomotives like the VO1000 in its RailKing lineup. However, for this run we get a purple box and all the high expectations that come with it.

The VO1000 was a 1,000-hp diesel-electric switcher produced by Baldwin Locomotive Works between 1939 and 1946. Baldwin built 548 units for the domestic market, with more than 50 railroads purchasing units. The United States Navy was the top buyer with 40 locomotives acquired.

A look at the switcher

This ProtoSound 3.0 model does have a Digital Command Control/Digital Command System decoder for anyone wanting to convert it to two-rail operation. It has freight sound effects.

The switcher has a die-cast metal frame with an ABS body. There are add-on metal grab irons and handrails, a metal horn, and LED lighting in the cab and the front and rear.

There's a fan-driven smoke unit. The Reading unit has two exhaust stacks; other models have between one and four.

At 14½ inches, the VO1000 can handle O-31 curves. Each truck has two pickup rollers. The wheels closest to the fuel tank have traction tires. Units weigh 3 lbs. 13.8 oz.

This solid runner with the distinctive rumble of a De La Vergne prime mover is great for any active yard or short line. – Chris Montagna, YouTube: Chris's Trains and Things

Premier Baldwin VO1000 by MTH Trains

MSRP: \$529.95

Road names: Pennsylvania RR (No. 20-21602-1, 20-21603-1); Canton Railroad (20-21604-1, 20-21605-1); Great Northern (20-21606-1, 20-21607-1); Reading (20-21608-1, 20-21609-1).

Custom runs: Long Island RR (20-21672-1, 20-21673-1) by Nassau Hobby; Copper Range (20-21656-1) by Pat's Trains; Louisville & Nashville (20-21656-1, 20-21657-1), Lehigh Valley (20-21644-1, 20-21645-1), and Milwaukee Road (20-21654-1, 20-21655-1) by Mr. Muffin's Trains; Elgin, Joliet & Eastern (20-21676-1, 20-21677-1) by Berwyn's Toy & Trains; and Pennsylvania Reading Seashore Lines (20-21668-1, 20-21669-1), Chicago Great Western (20-21674-1, 20-21675-1), and Sierra Railroad (20-21670-1, 20-21671-1) by Public Delivery Track.

Website: Mthtrains.com

WITH THE CTT STAFF



Menards Caboose Coffee Shop

This O scale caffeine joint is steaming!

The Menards Caboose Coffee Shop accessory now available, and it's going to make your O scale caffeine lovers very happy.

I love coffee. I also enjoy cabooses. This accessory mixes both very successfully. Really, what better use for an old crummy than a shop like this?

Like a lot of other Menards model railroad buildings, Caboose Coffee Shop gives maximum scenic effect while inhabiting minimal real estate. The whole operation occupies an 11 x 5-inch area, so all it needs is a narrow strip next to a road.

Full steam ahead

Operations at Caboose Coffee are moving at full steam as evidenced by the water-vapor "smoke" that puffs from the stack on the roof. This is the third item for which the company has used this system, and it works well. Just be sure not to use any mineral-oil based smoke fluid in it; that will ruin the unit.

Instead, fill it with distilled H₂O, then plug in the 4.5V power supply (sold separately – No. 279-4062 or 279-4050). Not

only will you get vapor but you will also see the illuminated interior, and exterior marker lights

Other great features on the Menards Caboose Coffee Shop include a die-cast Dodge Sweptside pickup, four figures, Jack the German shepherd, and landscaping for the "grounds."

If your layout is in need of a structure but you don't have much room, Menards Caboose Coffee may be just your cup of ... well, you get idea. All you need is a narrow plot next to a road to add some interest to your scene. – Hal Miller

O Scale Caboose Coffee Shop by Menards

Price: \$69.99 **Stock no.:** 275-9034

Features: Illuminated with interior and exterior LEDs; water-vapor smoke, customer and Jack the German Shepherd figures; die-cast Dodge Sweptside pickup

Website: Menards.com/Trains



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NJ, TOMS RIVER: ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents the Toms River Toy & Train Show. Elks Lodge, 600 Washington St., Toms River, NJ 08753. Sunday, August 20, 2023, 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, TOMS RIVER: ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents the Toms River Toy & Train Show. Elks Lodge, 600 Washington St., Toms River, NJ 08753. Sunday, October 1, 2023, 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.

NY, HAMBURG: TCA Uptate NY Chapter Toy Train Show! St. Mary's of the Lake Church Hall, 4737 Lakeshore Rd. (Rt. 5), Hamburg, NY 14075. Saturday, September 30, 2023. TCA Members: 9:00am. General Public: 9:30am-2:30pm. Admission: TCA Members, free. Adults, \$5.00, children 12-17, \$3.00, under 12 free w/paid adult. Contact: Mike 716-913-4195 or Dave 716-208-5842. Email: tcauptatenychapterevents@gmail.com

NY, LINDENHURST: Long Island Classic Train Show/Swap Meet. Fireman's Memorial Park, 555 Heling Blvd. (north of Hartford St.), Lindenhurst, NY 11757. September 24, 2023, November 5, 2023, January 7, 2024, and February 11, 2024. 8:30am-1:00pm. Adults \$5.00, under 16 free w/adult. 100+ tables. Handicap accessible. Contact: John Mitchell 917-596-3494. Email: LIClassicTrainShow@hotmail.com

OH, MASSILLON: CJ Trains Winter Train and Toy Show. Massillon Knights of Columbus Hall, 988 Cherry Road NW, 44647. Sunday, December 10, 2023, 10:00am-3:00pm. Admission: \$5.00, 12 and under FREE. \$25/dealer table, 152 - 8' dealer tables. Jon Ulbright, PO Box 446, Wooster, OH 44691, 330-262-7488, cathijon@ssnnet.com www.cjtrains.com

OH, MT. HOPE: CJ Trains Fall Train and Toy Show. Mt. Hope Event Center, 8076 St. Rt. 241, Zip 44660. Saturday, November 4, 2023, 10:00am-4:00pm. Admission: \$5.00, under 12/FREE. \$30/dealer table, 600+ 8' dealer tables. Contact: Jon Ulbright, PO Box 446, Wooster, OH 44691. 330-262-7488, cathijon@ssnnet.com www.cjtrains.com (GPS info: 8076 St. Rt. 241, Millersburg, OH 44654)

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PA, HAWLEY: Model Train Show & Sale. Hawley Fire Department, 17 Columbus Ave., Hawley, PA 18428. Sunday, October 1, 2023, 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission \$3.00, under 12 free with adult. Only 88 tables available. Bill Delling, 618 Fern St., Hawley, PA 18428, 705-226-3206

PA, YORK: All Gauge Train Show. October 16-18, 2023. Monday 8am-5pm, Tuesday 8am-5pm, Wednesday 8am-2pm. Wyndham Garden Hotel, 2000 Loucks Rd., York, PA 17408. 175 indoor tables, with an additional 150 outdoor vendor spaces available. Free admission (rain or shine). Vendor info, contact: Chuck Janiga, 716-390-8216, chuckstrainroom@live.com

WA, KELSO: LK&R MRR Club Train Show and Swap Meet. Saturday, September 9, 2023, 10am-3pm. Admission: \$5.00. Three Rivers Mall, Kelso, WA. Interstate 5, Exit 39, southwest corner. Over 150 tables. Information for vendors and guests, see our web site at: <http://lkrtrains.yolasite.com> or contact Kerry King 360-431-3992, email: lkrtrains@gmail.com

WI, MONROE: Green County Model Railroaders 45th Annual Model Train Show & Swap Meet. The Stateline Ice and Community Expo, 1632 4th Avenue West, Monroe, WI 53566. September 23-24, 2023. Saturday & Sunday, 10am-4pm. For information contact Kevin Johnson, 608-558-9332, or visit www.gcmrrinc.org

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

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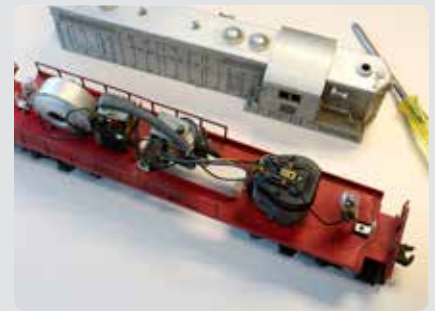
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Agawa Canyon Tour Train	5	Mianne Benchworks	25
American Models	5	Midwest Train Show.....	25
Arkansas Traveler Hobbies	54	Millhouse River Studio	54
Barts Pneumatics Corp.....	5	Model Train Stuff	60
Berkshire Trains	54	National Train Show	16
Bodnar's Auction Sales.....	8	Nicholas Smith Trains.....	19
BPH Enterprises	54	Nyerges Bolt & Screw Co.	54
Brasseur Electric Trains Inc.	8	Port Lines Hobby Supply	54
Brennan's Model Railroading	54	Raildesign.....	54
Charles Ro Supply Co.	17	Rich Roman	25
Charles Siegel's Train City	21, 54	Ross Custom Switches	23
East Coast Enterprises	25	Roundhouse South	25
Eastside Trains	9	S & W Parts Supply.....	8
Gargraves Trackage Corp.....	16	Showcase Express	24
Glenn Snyder Display Systems.....	24	T & K Hobby Shop.....	54
Great Toy Train Locomotives.....	22	Train & Toy Collection Buyer.....	8
Great Train Expo	25	Traincity.com.....	21, 54
Greenberg Shows.....	25	Trains & More.....	54
Grzyboski's Trains.....	7	Trains.com	59
Henning's Trains.....	54	TrainWorld	5
Lionel Collectors Club America	9	Trainz.com	16
Lionel Operating Train Society Inc.	21	Western Depot, The.....	5
Mario's Trains.....	21	WIRE-Plex.....	54
Menard, Inc.....	2, 53		

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REHAB A POSTWAR GP7

We take a 1950s Lionel No. 2328 Geep like you might find at an auction or swap meet, clean it up, and return it to operating condition. Find out how to get the horn working again, too.



MEET THE MODELER

In the latest installment, find out who Contributing Editor Chris Montagna is. In addition to being really good at building model railroad scenery and reviewing products, Chris has a few other pastimes.



PRODUCT REVIEWS

Locomotives, cars, and accessories! Recent products include Atlas O's new Multi-Max auto racks and Lionel's 2-6-0 Mogul steam engine (pictured). Members get video features, too!



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Lionel No. 1656 0-4-0

This capable switcher had some neat features

What locomotive means the most to you?

The beginning of my story is a familiar one, undoubtedly shared by many thousands of other youngsters in the fall of 1948. With Christmas just two months away, my treasured Lionel catalog was well-thumbed, especially a two-page spread that displayed the object of my dreams. On there was what I hoped would be a new train set to join the venerable prewar No. 229 locomotive that I'd inherited from my older sister three years before.

The set wasn't headed by an F3 diesel, a GG1 electric, or a big turbine steamer. Our family was still recovering from the deprivations of the war years, and I knew that an expensive set wasn't in the cards that year. But I had fallen for a modest and economical freight train led by a handsome, brawny 0-4-0.

I didn't know that No. 1656 was simply an update of a prewar design, and cared little that

I began a quest for my elusive switcher, but the memory of that pristine beauty far outshone the condition of the used examples that most often appeared in train shows and auctions.

it lacked smoke or an on-board whistle. What it did have were realistic remote-control knuckle couplers on both ends, promising lots of switching fun. It also had a ringing bell! No other Lionel steamer had that! While the price was listed

at \$35.95 – a fortune in those years – my parents had hinted that Christmas could be special for all of us.

What makes it special?

Fate works in mysterious ways. Late in November 1948 an

event occurred that shattered my dreams and changed the course of my life in many ways. The family's sole breadwinner, my father, was felled by an illness that ended his working career and

would take his life less than four years later.

I had no time to brood over the fact that Christmas that year, and no doubt those for some time after, would be lean ones. There would be no fancy toys under the tree. Over the

coming years everyone would be needed to contribute to our family's well-being, and despite my youth, I was determined to step up. Summer and weekend jobs loomed in my future, and I was ready.

How did you acquire it?

I was unable to rekindle my love for trains until well into the 1950s, and by then HO scale had attracted my attention. Somehow, though, I never forgot Lionel's handsome No. 1656. It remained lodged in the back of my mind well into the 1980s, when I abandoned HO to begin a collection of Lionel and other O gauge trains that have sustained my interest ever since.

I began a quest for my elusive switcher, but the memory of that pristine beauty far outshone the condition of the used examples that most often

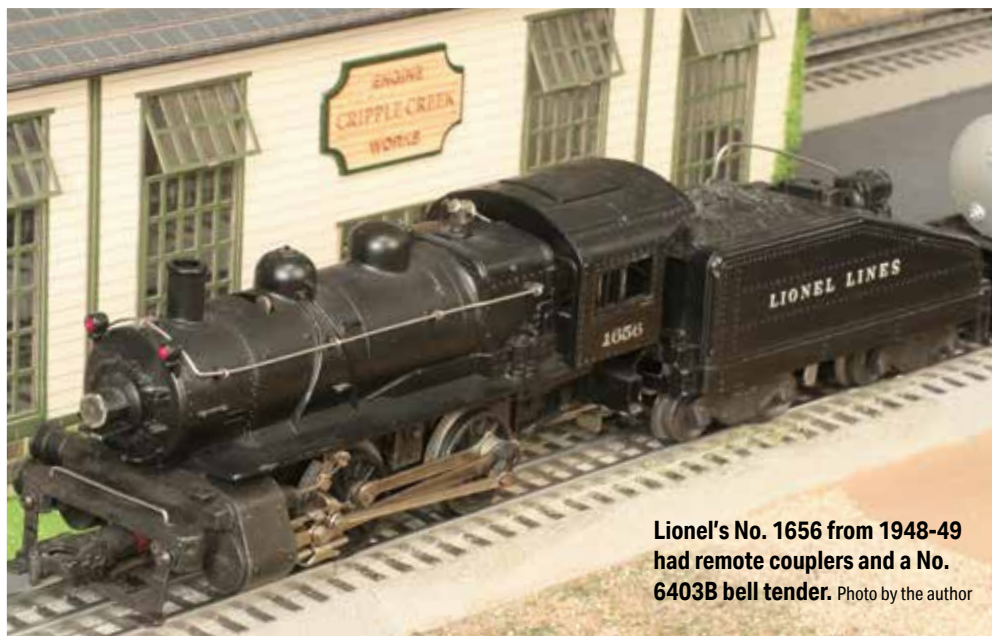
appeared in train shows and auctions. The years sped by.

It was well into the new millennium when, quite by chance, I wandered into a country auction and spied a simple cardboard carton with the magical word "Lionel" imprinted on it. I raised the flaps and found the individual bright and unspoiled boxes of the same set that was pictured in my childhood catalog. What's more, the No. 1656 switcher and its bell tender showed no sign of ever having been on the track.

Well over a half-century later, my childhood dream is now the sentimental prize of my collection, the locomotive I love the most. **CTT**



Peter H. Riddle has written books and many stories for Classic Toy Trains.



Lionel's No. 1656 from 1948-49 had remote couplers and a No. 6403B bell tender. Photo by the author

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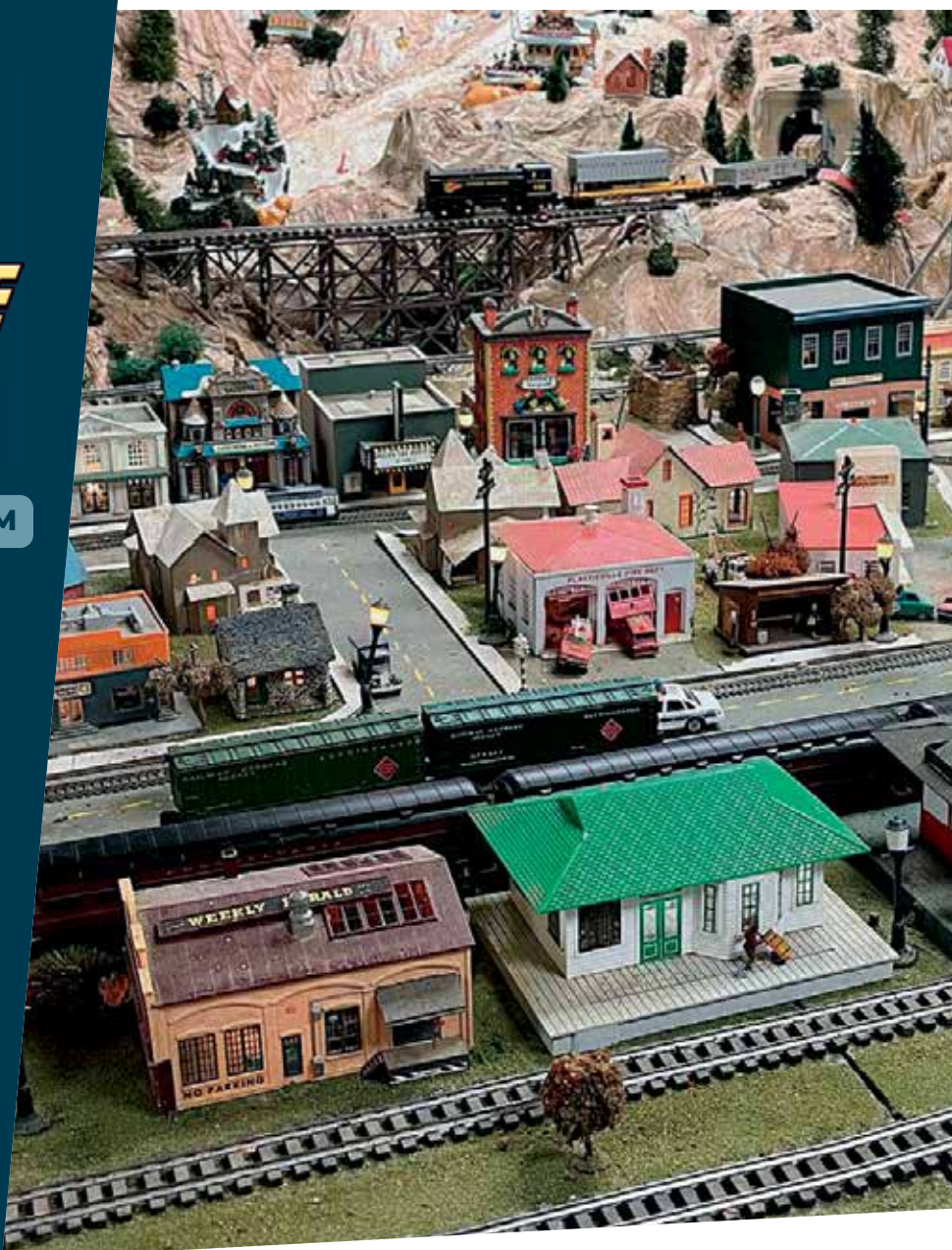


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