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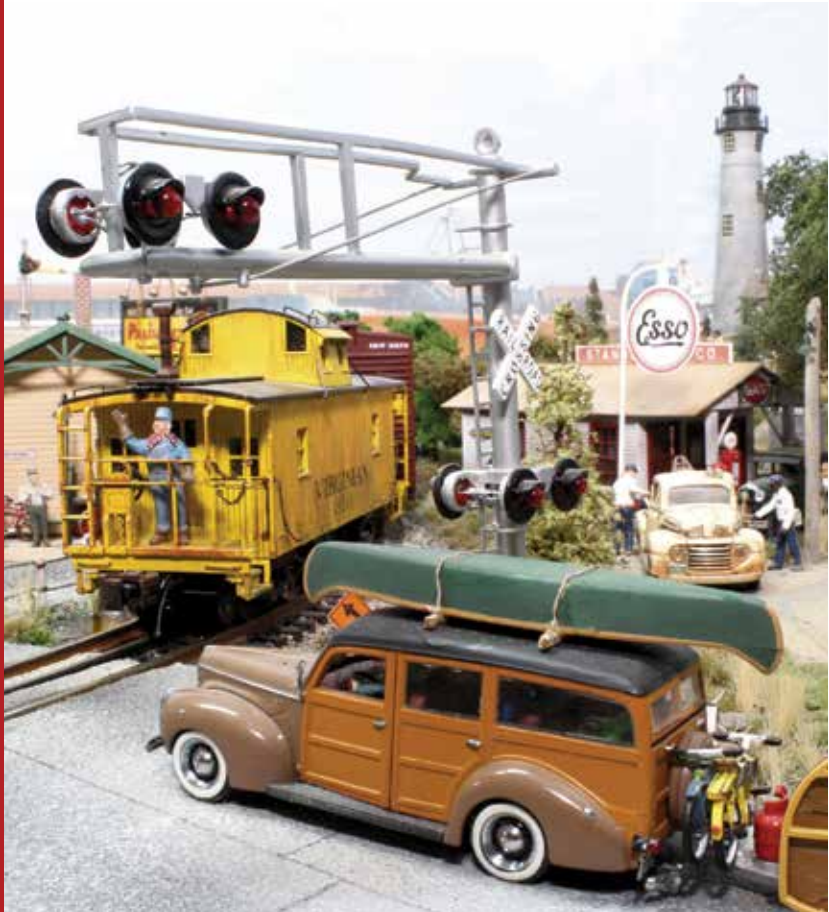
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# More changes for CTT

Shaking up the hobby can be a good thing

**A**s a relatively new editor, I had a long list of editorial topics in my back pocket. That got shook up when I learned that Kalmbach Media had sold most of its brands to Firecrown Media in May.

(Learn more about Firecrown and CEO Craig Fuller on p. 12.)

Did I know this was coming? No, I had no idea. Will it be a good thing? Yes, from everything I'm seeing, this will be a great move for CTT and the other magazines and brands purchased by Firecrown. By the way, Roger Carp will be staying with CTT.

I look back at the hobby and think about how manufacturers have changed over the decades. Lionel, for example, has undergone many changes and is still producing great trains



**Saying goodbye to 21027 Crossroads Circle, and hello to new opportunities in the future.**

nearly 125 years later. MTH, which announced its "closure" a few years ago, has found a groove producing custom and limited-run products.

What's not changing at CTT is our commitment

to bringing you the best layout and collection stories, how-to articles and track plans, information about new products and reviews, historical stories, and much more. Get ready for some amazing times down the road! Please reach out via email if you have questions.

*Rene Schweitzer*

**Rene Schweitzer, Editor**

Feel free to send comments and questions to [editor@ClassicToyTrains.com](mailto:editor@ClassicToyTrains.com)

## THE ENGINE BEHIND THE MODEL

Lionel released the No. 41 U.S. Army Switcher in 1955, just one year after the prototype entered service. Believe it or not, there was a photo of the prototype engine in our David P. Morgan Library. You can find an article about this O gauge engine and other Lionel postwar military switchers on [Trains.com](http://Trains.com). — *Rene*



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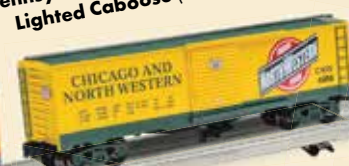
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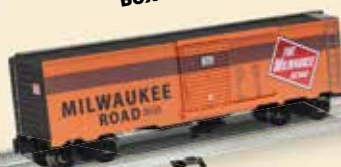
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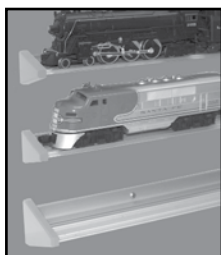
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## ■ ■ YOUR LETTERS



Reader David Osborn shared this photo of what he believes is a color variation of the Lionel No. 362 Barrel Loader. Notice the long metal trough painted a creamy white. He acquired it at a toy train auction.

## Lionel barrel loader with different color

The survey of Lionel No. 362 Barrel Loaders in the Summer 2024 issue got me to thinking about a fascinating loader I purchased at an auction for only \$10. This oddity, pictured here, made me wonder if a color variation of the 362 exists. The long metal trough was painted a cream color.

Here's the story. This 362 was included in an auction lot with other items. The high bidder got to take first pick of any of the items in the lot. Then the bidding started again, and the winner was invited to choose something else. This process was repeated through several bidders until the loader was the only thing left. My wife suggested I bid on it, and I got it for a mere \$10.

Then I examined the 362. The

trough that is usually yellow was instead a creamy white. The color had been applied evenly over the top and bottom, so I didn't think fading had occurred.

Turning over the loader, I saw it conformed to what the CTT article noted about the early production versions. The nicks in the paint showed bare metal underneath and no signs of yellow. Also, it didn't appear to have been disassembled and repainted.

Last, I studied the figure. My loader came with the correct figure, but someone had painted it. Who knows who did it or when the painting was done.

Quite a mystery — one that has baffled some advanced Lionel collectors. All I can do is hope an answer will surface. — *David Osborn, Ballwin, Mo.*

## Abandoned boxcars live!

The article by Chris Montagna in the Summer 2024 issue of *Classic Toy Trains* struck a chord with me. I had seen scenes with an abandoned boxcar on layouts and in magazines, but I didn't have one.

I started by looking on the Internet for photos of abandoned boxcars to get ideas about adding a similar model to my O gauge layout. Next, I went to a local train shop and spied a Lionel No. 2458 Pennsylvania RR Automobile Boxcar. It was well-loved (or maybe better described as "pre-weathered") and had suffered some damage along the way. In other words, it was exactly what I was looking for.

Without hesitation, I bought the car, removed the trucks and undercarriage, and propped it up on Moondog Express rubber ties left over from when I built my layout in 1990. I added some foliage and a couple of hobos. Then I took this picture.

While my project lacks any sort of animation, I like it because it was quick, easy, and cheap — and I like the results a lot. In fact it turned out exactly the way I had envisioned it, which I think is the sign of something well completed! Thanks again for an inspiring article. — *Gene Dodd, Raleigh, N.C.*



Adding a simple vignette having an abandoned boxcar doesn't take very much time or money, according to CTT contributor Gene Dodd. He did it with a "well-loved" Lionel model from the postwar era, removing a few parts and then propping it up in an area of his layout otherwise left unused.



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18043	C&O 'Yellow Belly' Streamlined Hudson.....	550.00
18046	Wabash 4-6-4 Hudson w/Railroads.....	295.00
18079	New York Central 2-8-2 Mikado.....	495.00
18094	Baltimore & Ohio 4-4-2 Atlantic.....	350.00
28051	Baltimore & Ohio EM-1 (Scale).....	895.00
28066	Baltimore & Ohio 4-6-2 Pacific (Scale).....	695.00
28067	Erie 4-6-2 Pacific (Scale).....	595.00
28072	New York Central J3a Hudson.....	795.00
28075	C&O 2-6-6-2 Mallet (Scale).....	695.00
28079	Chesapeake & Ohio 2-10-4 (Scale).....	895.00
28085	Norfolk & Western Y6B (Scale).....	1095.00
28099	JLC Union Pacific Grey Challenger.....	995.00
38026	Norfolk & Western J #606 (Scale).....	995.00
38047	Norfolk & Western 0-8-0 Switcher.....	495.00
38058	C&O 2-8-8-2 H-T (Scale).....	1195.00
38071	Southern Pacific (Scale) Cab-Forward.....	1195.00
38076	Chesapeake & Ohio Berkshire (Scale).....	795.00
38079	Southern Pacific (Scale) GS-2 #4410.....	895.00
38083	Norfolk & Western Y3 2-8-2 (Scale).....	995.00

## LIONEL 'LEGACY' STEAM LOCOMOTIVES

82534	NYC Empire State Express Hudson.....	1295.00
2331140	Middletown & Hummelstown 2-6-0.....	675.00
2331401	NYC Dreyfus Hudson #5449.....	1375.00
8006	ACL 'Silver Shadow' Hudson w/case.....	295.00
8101	Chicago & Alton 4-6-4 Hudson w/5 Pass.....	495.00
8606	Boston & Albany 4-6-4 Hudson.....	395.00
8615	Louisville & Nashville Berkshire w/case.....	495.00
18000	PRR B6 Switcher w/Railroads.....	350.00
18001	Rock Island 4-8-4 Northern w/Whistle.....	295.00
18009	NYC Scale 4-8-2 Mohawk w/Railroads.....	495.00
18011	Chessie Scale T-1 w/Railroads.....	450.00
18054	New York Central 0-4-0 Switcher.....	145.00
18090	Denver & Rio Grand Hudson w/RailSnds.....	195.00
18636	B&O Presidential 4-6-2 Pacific (Green).....	195.00
18684	LRRC 4-6-2 Pacific Steam Locomotive.....	175.00

## LIONEL NON-POWERED UNITS

8059	PRR Green 5-Stripe F-3 B-unit.....	150.00
8164	PRR Green 5-Stripe F-3 B w/horn.....	195.00
18178	New York Central F-3 B-unit.....	195.00
2133039	NYC SuperBass E-7 B #4104 (Scale).....	299.95
2133049	PRR SuperBass E-7 B #5900B (Scale).....	299.95
2133089	NYC SuperBass E-7 B #4102 (Scale).....	299.95

## TUBULAR TRACK T-R SETS

1154	Reading 'Yardking' NW-2 Freight (LN).....	150.00
1387	Milw. Rd Steam Passenger (used).....	195.00
1460	Grand National Chessie U36B (sealed).....	295.00
1587	B&O Capitol Ltd. Steam Pass. (sealed).....	295.00
1661	Rock Island Steam Freight (sealed).....	150.00
11006	Lenny the Lion 4-4-2 Steam Freight.....	199.95
11707	Amtrak 'Silver Spike' Passenger (sealed).....	225.00
11716	Lionelville Circus 4-4-0 Freight (sealed).....	195.00
11723	Amtrak Maintenance RS-3 Diesel Freight.....	245.00
11813	Crayola Crayons Set (sealed).....	125.00
11818	Chrysler Power Diesel Frt. Set.....	195.00
11819	Georgia Power NW-2 Diesel Freight.....	295.00
11828	New Jersey Transit NW-2 / Passenger Set.....	200.00
11841	Bloomington's 4-4-2 Steam Frt.....	295.00
11933	Dodge Motorsport Freight Set.....	175.00
11985	Quaker Oats 4-4-2 Steam Frt. Set.....	249.95
21796	New Jersey Medical Steam Freight Set.....	249.95
52218	Monopoly Steam Frt. Set (sealed).....	295.00

## LIONEL 'TMCC' DIESELS

14500	Kansas City Southern F-3 'AA'.....	495.00
14504	to 07 Santa Fe Warbonnet F3 ABAs.....	595.00
14532	/24510 Pennsylvania Sharknose ABAs.....	895.00
14558	/65/24519 B&O F-3 ABAs (Scale).....	1095.00
14574	/86 Delaware & Hudson PA Alco ABA(TR).....	695.00
14582	/83/84 PWC Wabash F-3 ABAs.....	495.00
18135	New York Central F-3 'AA'.....	395.00
18160	/38115 New York Central FT ABA's.....	395.00
18241	Burlington Northern SD-60.....	275.00
18245	/48 Pennsylvania PA Alco ABA's.....	495.00
18246	Union Pacific Dash-9 44Cw 'Scale'.....	325.00
18322	Lackawanna (Maroon Top) Trainmaster.....	395.00
18328	/34 New Haven MU Passenger 4-Car Set.....	495.00
18353	Pennsylvania E-33 Rectifier.....	225.00
18356	Penn Central Scale GG-1 (test-run).....	1095.00
18516	Phantom Diesel w/#15507 4-Car Set.....	595.00
18567	Pennsylvania GP-7.....	225.00
18582	Seaboard NW-2 (blue & orange).....	350.00
18978	PWC Chesapeake & Ohio NW-2.....	350.00
24500	Denver & Rio Grande PA Alco 'AA' (Scale).....	495.00
24507	Milwaukee Road PA Alco 'AA' (Scale).....	650.00
24520	Alaska Railroad F-3 'AA' (Scale).....	550.00
24534	/38 Erie-Lackawanna F-3 ABAs (Scale).....	895.00
24544	/47 New York Central F-2 ABA's (LN).....	595.00
24552	Union Pacific F-3 ABA's (Scale).....	795.00
24579	/83 New York Central ET ABA's.....	895.00
28244	Norfolk & Western C-420 (Scale).....	395.00
28518	PWC Pennsylvania EP-5.....	295.00
28522	Missouri Pacific RS-11 (Scale).....	295.00
28524	Chessie SD40-2 (Scale).....	325.00
28539	Baltimore & Ohio S-2 (Scale).....	350.00
28540	Union Pacific SD40T-2 (Scale).....	325.00
28855	Chessie GP-30 (Scale).....	395.00
28862	CSX GP-30 #4249 (Scale).....	400.00
38144	Chesapeake & Ohio F-3 'AA'.....	495.00
52347	LOTS Santa Fe Warbonnet SD-80 Mac.....	395.00
2135130	Southern Pacific Ballast Tamper.....	144.95

## POSTWARD REMAKE SETS

21759	Canadian Pacific F3 Pass. Set (sealed).....	995.00
31721	PRR GG-1 'Majestic' Freight Set.....	550.00
31727	Rio Grande F-3 'AB' Freight Set.....	595.00
31739	Hudson 773 Freight Set #13150.....	950.00
31742	/25473 Santa Fe F3 ABA's Pass. Set (LN).....	795.00
31776	Lackawanna #2219w FM Frt. Set.....	395.00
38311	B&O RDC Budd 3-Car Set.....	299.95
38313	B&O Budd 2-Car Power/Dummy Set.....	250.00
38324	New Haven F-3 Freight Set #2507w.....	495.00
38329	Virginian Rectifier Set #2505w.....	445.00
38349	C&O GP-7 Freight Set #12885-500.....	500.00
82726	Green Alco Passenger Set.....	459.95



### ▼ William Decker's O gauge layout

After sending a message to us offering compliments about a photograph published in *Classic Toy Trains* showing a particularly intriguing foreign toy train, William Decker added that he also "has a thing for imported articulated trains." To prove his interest, he sent us this photo of a JEP No. 5780 Nord Autorail, which was manufactured in France between 1935 and 1942. William parked the handsome two-car set next to a Marx No. 2960 Girard Whistling Station with illumination cataloged during the 1950s. A cool assortment of American and foreign O gauge trains fills out his roster in Columbus, Ohio, so he never runs out of eye-catching engines and cars to operate.



**Send your best pictures** of toy train subjects to CTT Photo Album, 18650 W. Corporate Dr., Ste. 103, Brookfield WI 53045. 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. Email digital photos (1 mg or larger) to [photoalbum@ClassicToyTrains.com](mailto:photoalbum@ClassicToyTrains.com)

If you send us a photograph and we decide to publish it, we will pay you \$50 as long as we have not previously bought the photo.

### ► Andrew Lewis' S gauge layout

Heritage units, which honor the railroads whose identities were lost as massive lines were created through mergers, enable contemporary model railroaders to enhance their locomotive rosters with striking paint schemes and historic road names. Case in point is this S gauge replica of a General Electric ES44AC road diesel from Lionel. The No. 42550 was most recently cataloged in the American Flyer line in 2016, and it looks fabulous on Andrew Lewis' home layout in Elkins Park, Pa. Andrew has no clue why the figures hanging out by the freight station are ignoring the Nickel Plate Road-painted behemoth as the sun is setting and lights are starting to beam.





### ◀ David Besanko's O gauge layout

The photograph David Besanko snapped on his O gauge layout in Evanston, Ill., carries us back in time 70 years, when the *Broadway Limited* on the Pennsylvania RR competed vigorously with the *20th Century Limited* on the New York Central between New York City and Chicago. Airliners and automobiles would rob the crack streamlined trains of most of their passengers in the next decade, but on this morning in June of 1954 they were supreme. David loves running his Lionel No. 34508 E7 A-A combination decorated in Brunswick Green with sweeping gold stripes.







### ◀ Lee French's O gauge layout

Frightening how Halloween has become big business for Lionel and MTH Electric Trains over the past decade. The two rivals put out a variety of O gauge locomotives, rolling stock, and operating accessories enticing modelers with a passion for ghosts, goblins, and zombies. Count Lee French among the ranks of those who like to scare visitors, which he does every autumn with his Lionel No. 28695 Transylvania RR 0-6-0T steam switcher. The orange-and-black engine greets grave diggers and jaunty skeletons on his railroad in Windermere, Fla.

### ▼ Anker Winther's O gauge layout

Brooklyn Eastern District Terminal (BEDT) No. 14 is on display this afternoon at Gotham Union Terminal, and a couple of railfans have planted themselves on the platform to record the event. Anker Winther, a resident of Ringoes, N.J., created the O gauge model by mounting the body shell of a Lionel No. 8200 Kickapoo 0-4-0T Dockside steam engine on the mechanism of a new Lionel 0-6-0T switcher and then adding new lettering he printed. Almost hidden in the shadows behind is a New Jersey Public Service PCC car. The street scene over the subway consists of some Plasticville U.S.A. structures with upper floors generated on PowerPoint.







### ▲ Cape Atlantic Model Railroad Club's O gauge layout

What makes a toy train club great? How about a wonderful sense of camaraderie among its members and an eagerness on their part to share the pleasures of the hobby with wide-eyed youngsters, nostalgic adults, and families looking for ways to tighten their bonds. The volunteers and officers of the Cape Atlantic Model Railroad Club exemplify these outstanding qualities as well as a commitment to running long and colorful trains over their three-rail layout in Cape May, N.J. In the very next issue of *Classic Toy Trains*, you'll find a long list of other layouts open to the public. Be sure to check out ones located near you and consider visiting or even joining a club.

### ► Karl Sablich's O gauge layout

Slightly more than a decade ago, in the February 2014 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*, Karl Sablich introduced his O gauge model railroad known as the Copper Country Central. The 4 x 8-foot layout in Brillion, Wis., proved to be such a hit with readers that we've been waiting to share another picture or two. Fortunately for us, Karl has been busy updating scenes, with this logging area being among his favorites. He stopped the Williams by Bachmann 4-6-0 long enough so the team of horses (actually built from kits sold by Berkshire Express) won't bolt.





# Welcome to Firecrown Media

BY CRAIG FULLER

**M**y company, Firecrown Media, has acquired Kalmbach's esteemed railroad magazines and media properties, including renowned titles such as *Model Railroader*, *Classic Trains*, *Trains*, *Garden Railways*, and *Classic Toy Trains*.

As the new custodians of these cherished and respected brands, we are committed to upholding their legacy and nurturing their growth.

Firecrown Media, a rapidly expanding media company, is dedicated to acquiring and stewarding magazine and digital media brands in the transportation sector. Our portfolio includes *Flying*, *Boating*, *Yachting*, and *FreightWaves*, among 50 other loved brands.

Firecrown Media is young; it has only been around for three years, but it is funded by a billion-dollar family office with a significant focus on media. After acquiring brands, we have invested over \$40 million in them.

As Firecrown's founder, I drive much of the passion and energy behind our media strategy.

I started in media in 2017 when I launched *FreightWaves*, a digital media company often called the "Bloomberg of freight." In just seven years, it has become the most prominent voice covering the freight industry, with deep news and analysis of the trucking, rail, air, and ocean container markets. *FreightWaves* is also one of the fastest-growing B2B media companies in the world.

While I am a digital native, I love print magazines. My love for print publications began when I was a boy; *Flying* was a magazine I grew up reading. So, when I had the opportunity to acquire it in 2021, I did. My purchase of *Flying* began as a passion project; after all, I am a private pilot.

My initial plan was to shutter the print magazine and focus on the digital edition. However, I remembered how I felt each month when I received my copy in the mail. Fully understanding and appreciating the power and love of print magazines, we soon realized that print magazines offered an experience for readers that digital couldn't match.

Unlike digital apps or websites, consuming print content provides the reader with an undistracted journey. When reading content online, one is constantly distracted by emails, Slack messages, and social media feeds.

None of that exists in print.

Print magazines offer the reader an experience and a journey unparalleled in any digital format. In recent years, we've seen younger generations (the "Zoomers") start to prefer print magazines over digital. For them, print magazines are innovative and tangible, providing a premium



experience compared to digital offerings.

After our success with *Flying* (revenues up 5x since we acquired it in 2021), we expanded our portfolio through 20 acquisitions and rebranded as Firecrown Media.

Firecrown's playbook for the Kalmbach titles will follow our experience with other publications and digital assets we've acquired.

We will invest significantly in print magazines, creating coffee table-worthy magazines with gorgeous photography and stories that engage audiences. Print magazines should be timeless and some-

thing that readers want to keep.

In addition to creating beautiful print magazines, we will also make significant investments in the digital websites in our portfolio. This will include significant upgrades to *Trains.com* and all of the affiliated properties.

Rest assured, we plan to keep the forums, but our roadmap includes significant upgrades to ensure their stability and functionality with more modern aesthetics and experience.

We also have big plans for video products and plan to introduce new podcasts to serve and engage the community.

All of these investments will take time, but in a few months, you will start to see improvements in the online products, and over the next year, you will see a relaunch of the print versions.

You will also be glad to know that we are committed to the modeling community and the railroad brands we just acquired.

I am bullish on the future of modeling and its attractiveness for younger generations.

As the parents of five children (ages 3 to 17), my wife and I spend much time and effort introducing our kids to hobbies that do not involve screens and devices. We want to find experiences that exist in the physical world.

Model railroading offers a four-dimensional experience that does exactly that. For example, I have a small Lionel layout that I have been building with my 5-year-old son.

It is an opportunity for the two of us to make something that is limited only by his imagination. Best of all, I can share my knowledge and love of the freight railroads with him as we develop and play with our evolving model railroad. As an entrepreneur, I love building things; he can help me participate in the journey.

I would love to hear your thoughts and ideas on improving the *Model Railroader*, *Trains*, *Classic Trains*, *Classic Toy Trains*, *Garden Railways*, and *Trains.com* experience.

You can find me on X: @freightalley.





## Lionel Legacy SD50

ALL-NEW TOOLING FOR THIS MODERN DIESEL

**T**he SD50 was a 3,500-hp diesel-electric locomotive produced by General Motors' Electro-Motive Division from 1980 through 1987. More than 400 units were produced as the successor to the turbocharged 20-cylinder SD45. Conrail was the top customer for these engines, with 135 units purchased.

Lionel's version comes with the latest technology, including Legacy command control, Bluetooth, and the ability to operate with Lionel Voice Control. The latter feature enables users to speak into the Lionel app, giving commands to the engine, which will respond appropriately. While Lionel Voice Control may seem like a gimmick, it provides excellent accessibility options for hobbyists who are unable to use a tactile remote or the full features within app-based control.

Front and rear Electro-Couplers allow users to move freight around with ease.

Minor road-specific details include horn placement, PTC equipment, and ditch lights. Ditch lights are cataloged on only the Conrail and Reading & Northern options.

At 19" in length, this SD50 is about 1.25" longer than true 1:48 scale, compared to the prototype. With its three-axle trucks, the Lionel model requires O-54 curves to operate. A kinematic pilot offers a more prototypical appearance without forcing greater curve restrictions. Weighing a solid 5 pounds 5.1 ounces, the SD50 has a pulling power of 1.8 lbs. One axle on each truck is equipped with traction tires; a spare set is packed in the box.

This O gauge model has

two flywheel motors, one per truck. The smoke unit's funnel is rectangular and deeper than older designs. This design prevents overflowing the unit and damaging the electronics.

A standard "Mr. Lionel" sound file is included. There are five horn and bell options for operators who are looking for a specific pitch for their railroad. An infrared (IR) sensor is embedded in the bottom of the fuel tank, allowing connection to Lionel SensorTrack.

While we're waiting for the Base3 system to arrive later this year or next, it appears these diesels do not have four-digit addressing. Lionel seems



to hold out on this feature for VisionLine or "special" models, which is disappointing, as it's a hallmark of the Base3.

Overall, this SD50 is a win for Lionel. The models look fantastic, and their colors appear to be perfect. The model I ran has a quiet smoke unit and runs without issue. You can combine them with your pick of SD40 or SD45s to create many colorful lashups.

Six road names were offered: Chessie (2433231, 2433232, 2433239), Denver & Rio Grande Western (2433261, 2433262, 2433269), Missouri Pacific (2433271, 2433272, 2433279), Norfolk Southern (2433281, 2433282, 2433289), Conrail (2433241, 2433249, 2433250), and Reading & Northern (2433291, 2433299). – *Chris Montagna*

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

### LIONEL LEGACY SD50

**MSRP:** \$549.99-\$649.99, depending on model

**Features:** TMCC, Legacy, or conventional control; Bluetooth control; Lionel Voice Control; fan-driven smoke unit; IR transmitter for SensorTrack; O-54 operation; front and rear ElectroCouplers

**Roadnames:** See text

**Website:** [lionel.com](http://lionel.com)





## Atlas Premier E8 diesel

A LOOK AT THIS SLEEK AND ACCURATE O GAUGE MODEL

One problem that I've had with almost all the Atlas O Premier line models relates to the blue box they arrive in. The box seems to be half a centimeter too short, causing the end flaps to bend around the foam insert and not stay securely closed.

Inside the box you'll find a tightly wrapped locomotive tied with white Atlas ribbons so you can easily remove the model from the foam protection. A dummy O gauge coupler and spare traction tires are also provided.

Though details on the EMD E8 diesel are minimal, Atlas does a fantastic job creating a sleek and accurate model. The vertical handrails and nose grab irons are separate, factory-applied and painted wire parts. The cab and engine room access doors are sprung.

Inside the cab are factory-painted crew figures and a control stand with unpainted,

molded gauges. The headlight, class lights, and number boxes are illuminated with light-emitting diodes (LEDs) that reduce the amperage draw from a transformer. The controls for volume, DCS/DCC, and smoke are behind the rear door, which is secured with a magnet and folds down to facilitate access to the controls.

The ABS body has crisply defined rivet detail. The roof features free-spinning fans and two exhaust holes for the fan-driven smoke unit.

At 18" in length, the 1:48-proportion E8 is a tad longer than scale to the 70'-3" prototype. Even at that length, the non-flanged wheels on the inside axle set of each truck let

this model navigate O-31 curves.

The Atlas Premier E8 features flywheel motors, one per truck. The smoke unit has a deep brass funnel under the front exhaust port. The LEDs for the headlight and number boxes are affixed to a steel structure attached to the frame. This reduces the wires between the shell and the frame when the shell is removed.

The die-cast metal frame accounts for much of the model's 4 pounds, 14.5 ounces. With a pulling power of 3 pounds, the six-axle cab unit has plenty of power to pull a string of passenger cars without assistance of more units.



The scale coupler mounting holes were drilled into the die-cast metal pilot. I decided to add a Kadee coupler to the front of my model for a more prototypical appearance.

Atlas offers three road numbers for most road names (two powered units and one non-powered model per scheme). BN and NJ Commuter units are sold as two powered units only.

The models offered include: Penn Central (30138235, 30138236, 30138242), Amtrak (30138229, 30138230, 30138241), Burlington Northern (30138231, 30138231), Kansas City Southern (30138239, 30138240, 30138244), NJ Commuter (Transition Scheme — 30138233, 30138234), and Rock Island (30138237, 30138238, 30138243). — *Chris Montagna*

### ATLAS PREMIER E8 DIESEL

**MSRP:** \$599.95 (powered) and \$279.95 (non-powered)

**Features:** ProtoSound 3.0, directionally controlled LED headlight, ProtoSmoke diesel exhaust, illuminated LED number boxes, illuminated cab interior, O-31 operation, front ElectroCoupler

**Website:** [shop.atlasrr.com](http://shop.atlasrr.com)



## News bits

### ■ In memoriam:

Lionel enthusiast and historian Fred "Skip" Natoli died on June 17, 2024. We at *Classic Toy Trains* remember him with gratitude for sharing his O gauge layout with our readers and offering insights on how to model New York City during the post-World War II decades with elegance and wonder. A native of the Bronx, Skip had the good fortune to visit the Lionel showroom and could recall with clarity the 16 x 32-foot Super O layout built there in 1958. It inspired a lifelong commitment to three-rail modeling, one complemented by Skip's appreciation of the New York Central railroad and the New York Yankees. We send our condolences to the Natoli family. — Roger Carp



**Liquid haulers:** MTH Electric Trains is releasing modern tank cars as part of the RailKing line. The O gauge freight cars will be available in five different paint schemes (Nos. 30-73633, 30-73634 shown, 30-73635, 30-73636, and 30-73637) and operate on O-27 curves. Expected delivery in October 2024. **Price:** \$69.95. **Website:** mthtrains.com



**Local favorite:** Dixie Union Station, 110 W. Main St., Mason, OH 45040, offers a custom-run MTH structure with Skyline Chili graphics as part of the RailKing line (No. 30-90696). The O gauge two-story structure is fully painted and assembled and features LED lighting. Expected delivery in October 2024. **Price:** \$89.95. Order from [dixieunionstation.com](http://dixieunionstation.com)



**Festive fun:** The Lionel Collectors Club of America (LCCA) is selling a custom-run Lionel Christmas boxcar for 2024 (No. 2401570). The car is 10½" long with opening three-panel doors and operates on O-31 curves. Members can order up to two cars. **Price:** \$99. To learn more visit [lionelcollectors.org](http://lionelcollectors.org) or call the business office at 815-223-0115.

**Moo-ving cattle:** Menards has released the Cripple Creek & Western Cattle Car (No. 275-9286). The O gauge model features die-cast metal wheels and trucks, opening doors, and more. **Price:** \$39.99. Order from [menards.com/trains](http://menards.com/trains). Find a product review of this new freight car on [Trains.com](http://Trains.com).



**Want to submit?** Send complete ordering information and a high-resolution photo to [editor@classictoytrains.com](mailto:editor@classictoytrains.com)



**Lionel at War:** Lionel historian Bob Osterhoff has released another DVD filled with documents from the company's past: *Lionel Military and Wartime Production: Hillside, N.J., Factory Documentation*. An HTML-based application designed to function best on a Windows operating system, it can be ordered for \$20 plus \$5 shipping from Bob Osterhoff, 1622 Garden Valley Dr., Wildwood, MO 63038. Learn more at [trainpaper.com](http://trainpaper.com)



**Have a cold one:** E-Z Catch Train Shop has announced custom-run MTH 36-foot wood-side refrigerator cars as part of the Premier line. The O gauge reefers are available with Bergner & Engel Brewing Co. (two numbers: Nos. 20-94711 and 20-94710) or Manhattan Special (two numbers: Nos. 20-94700 and 20-94699, shown). Estimated delivery in October 2024. **Price:** \$74.99. **Website:** [e-zcatch.square.site](http://e-zcatch.square.site)



**More festive fun:** MTH is making Christmas items for its O gauge RailKing line. Available items include this No. 30-21253 Alco PA diesel for \$399.95, along with the Nos. 30-21238 General Electric ES44AC Imperial diesel (\$399.95), 30-70131 four-car double-door plugged boxcar set (\$349.95), and more. Delivery expected in October of this year. Learn more on the MTH website at [mthtrains.com](http://mthtrains.com)

**Operating room:** Project Roar Publishing announces a second printing of *Authoritative Guide to Lionel's Postwar Operating Cars*. Authors Joseph Algozzini and Emanuel Piazza have updated important information based on rare documents and the observations of collectors to make this reference book more valuable to Lionel collectors and operators. Priced at \$54.94 plus shipping, this saddle-stitched paperback can be ordered from [projectroar.com](http://projectroar.com)



### See more reviews online:

- Williams by Bachmann E-Z Street Vehicles
- Lionel EMD GP30 road diesel
- Menards Sunoco gas station
- MTH EMD SD35 road diesel



**Loaded luggage:** JLM Trains LLC, 17 Douglas Rd., Freehold NJ 07728, sells replacement baggage trucks with loads to fit the Lionel No. 356 Operating Freight Station. The trucks are sold in pairs and are available in three colors (red, dark green shown here, and light green). The firm also sells individual lithographed metal baggage loads. **Price:** \$40 for the loaded baggage trucks; \$25 for baggage load. **Website:** [jlmtrains.com](http://jlmtrains.com)



**Moving the goods:** Millhouse River Studio, 2541 River Rd., Niagara Falls, NY 14304, is making a 36"-long operating conveyor. It has adjustable front legs, so you can adjust the height and angle. The unit is made from aluminum and includes a power supply, 6-foot cord, and 6-foot power lead to the motor. **Price:** \$395 plus shipping. To order, call 716-830-5267. Visit [millhouseriverstudio.com](http://millhouseriverstudio.com) for more information.



**Special sea creatures:** Pat's Trains, 142 29th St., Wheeling WV, 26003, has announced custom-run MTH aquarium cars in three different designs as part of the RailKing product line (Nos. 30-796943, 30-79694, and 30-79695, shown). The O gauge operating cars feature metal wheels and axles and run on O-27 curves. Expected delivery in November of this year. **Price:** \$84.95. Order at [patstrains.com](http://patstrains.com)





## Lionel's No. 3484 Pennsylvania RR Operating Boxcar

NOTABLE ADDITION IN A NOTABLE YEAR

**T**he push at Lionel toward freight and passenger cars with greater fidelity to O scale (1:48) dimensions, a trend launched with the No. 6462 gondola in 1949, gathered speed after 1952. Key was the introduction in 1953 of four near-scale boxcars. With those initial entries in the No. 6464 series, Lionel announced as well a similarly realistic 10½"-long double-door automobile boxcar (the No. 6468) and an operating boxcar — the No. 3484 Pennsylvania RR.

### BACKGROUND

Marketing executives, eager to catalog an operating boxcar, pressed designers to supplement the line for 1953 with an updated version. They wanted a 6464 boxcar to be equipped with the plunger mechanism perfected in 1949.

Engineers had only to modify the 10½"-sheet-metal frame created for the brand-new near-scale single-door cars. They did so with ease to bring out the 3484.

The Pennsylvania RR operating boxcar was, in technical terms, nothing more than an oversized descendant of the models Lionel had offered since 1949. The 3484, like the Nos. 3464 and 3474 models, came with a metal plunger that enclosed a solenoid. The

mechanism was attached to the underside of the boxcar's sheet-metal frame.

The 3484, like its smaller predecessors, used an electromagnet put in a special track section for its animation. In that notable respect, it really did not represent innovation at Lionel, more like the continuation of a solid sales trend.

### HOW IT WORKED

An operator stopped the Pennsy boxcar at precisely the right spot over an uncoupling control section placed on the loop of track. Then he or she pressed a button on a remote controller sold with it.

Doing so energized the magnet installed in the UCS, an action that pulled down the plunger on the car. That

motion slid open a door on one side of the car and enabled the blue unpainted Vinylite railroad figure mounted on a metal rod to move forward as though he were preparing to handle some sort of task on the car.

The simple yet thrilling sequence devised by Development Engineer Frank Pettit (with some assistance from Chief Engineer Joseph Bonanno, who received a patent for the operating boxcar in 1959) worked wonders on all the operating cars.

### ODDLY OVERLOOKED

The parade of operating boxcars built to nearly scale proportions marched on after 1953. It all began with the monochromatic scheme of the 3484. Designers had its Tuscan red plastic shell painted the same color and stamped with a white Pennsy keystone and white railroad data, including a built date of 5-53.

The single-block doors were painted Tuscan red. The bar-end trucks came with

operating knuckle couplers. A brake wheel was put at one end of the boxcar.

Decision makers chose to catalog the 3484 as a separate-sale item priced at \$6.50. They also used it as a component of three cataloged outfits in 1953, the only year the Pennsy operating boxcar was part of the regular line. All were high-end O gauge sets led by either a No. 736 Berkshire steam engine and tender or an F3 duo of powered and unpowered A units (Nos. 2353 Santa Fe or 2354 New York Central).

Lionel dropped the 3484 operating car from its line after 1953. However, it initially used the same type I body shell for the No. 6464-200 Pennsylvania RR boxcar introduced in 1954. Then designers substituted a type II shell.

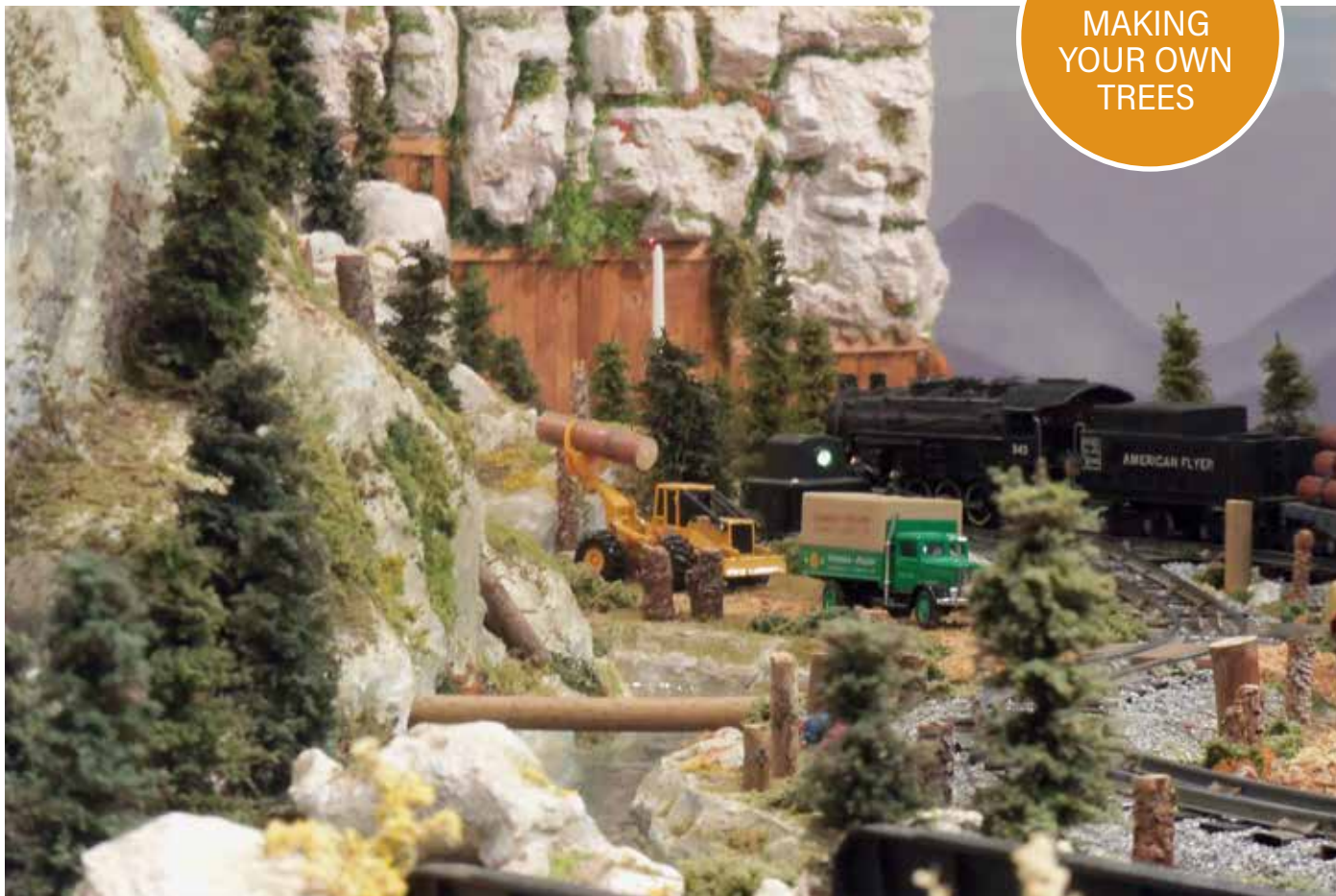
*Lionel cataloged the No. 3484 Pennsylvania RR Operating Boxcar in 1953. The 2025 edition of Greenberg's Pocket Price Guide to Lionel Trains values this car at \$21 in good condition and \$58 in excellent.*



# TREES GIVE A LAYOUT PERSONALITY

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BARBARA RUDNICKI

TIPS FOR  
MAKING  
YOUR OWN  
TREES



➞ **FILLING AN O OR S GAUGE** layout with trees can be expensive. Even if you can afford to buy lots of commercial trees, you'll find they tend to look identical: same height, same shape, and same color. Luckily, making your own trees can be an easy and enjoyable process that guarantees physical difference and visual appeal to give any railroad its own personality. And it won't break your hobby budget. Here are some of my favorite tips for making pine trees using common materials. In no time at all, you'll be an expert and may find it's hard to stop!

## WHAT YOU NEED

Here's everything you need. I mention additional tools in the text:

- 22-gauge stem wire from a crafts store
- Twine, bailing rope, or sisal rope from a home-improvement center
- Hot-glue gun
- Safety wire twister (a 9" model from Harbor Freight Tools)
- Flat brown spray paint
- Inexpensive hair spray (the cheaper the better to get more lacquer)
- Fine flocking in different shades of green





## TRUNK AND BRANCHES

Using a pair of side-cutters, you start by cutting a piece of stem wire that's twice the length of the tree height you want. Then fold the stem wire in half and crimp the fold with a pair of pliers.

Unfurl the end of a piece of twine and insert it between the folds of the stem wire near the top. Leave a small space at the

top. Next, you cut the twine so the piece is fairly small. You can trim it some more later. **(Photo 1)**

Spread apart the fibers of twine just a bit. These form the branches of your tree. They're not usually crammed together, but you can make them that way as you prefer.

Put the next piece of twine between the folds of the stem wire, cutting it a bit wider than

the previous cut. Just continue until you reach the bottom of the wire. Leave a bit of empty space at the bottom so you can plant the tree. **(Photo 2)**

Do not pick up the tree at this point or the twine fibers will fall out. Run a small bead of glue from your hot-glue gun alongside the stem wire. Flip the tree over and run another bead along the stem wire on the other side of the tree. The

faster you move the glue gun, the smaller the bead will be. This secures the twine fibers for the next step. **(Photo 3)**

You may want to trim the tree so the fibers form a bell shape (curving downward) to make realistic tree. Experiment to make the shape yours.



## PAINT AND FLOCKING

Place the top end of the tree stem wire in a vise and carefully tighten. Then insert the bottom two pieces of the stem wire into the jaws of the 9-inch safety wire twister and gently lock the jaws together.

Pull the twister as shown in **Photo 4**. If your vise is not bolted down, hold it with your left hand while pulling the twister with your right hand. Pull the twister one or two times more than the number of inches tall your tree will be. Be careful here because you don't want to pull it so many times that the stem wire begins twisting on itself.

Trim any twine stragglers with a pair of scissors.

Spray the tree with flat brown paint. If you don't have a spray booth, insert the pine tree into a piece of Styrofoam and paint it outside. **(Photo 5)**

While the paint is still wet, apply fine (not coarse) flocking to the top of the branches. Do so by holding the tree on the bottom trunk (stem wire) and tip it at a 45-degree angle. Pine needles don't grow on the bottom of the branches.

On to the next step. As shown in **Photo 6**, use some different shades of green flocking to vary the colors of your trees. Or mix the greens

together to end up with some additional varieties of color.

Apply a thin film of inexpensive hair spray and flock the branches again. Repeat this process until you're satisfied with the fullness and look of the tree.

## READY TO PLANT

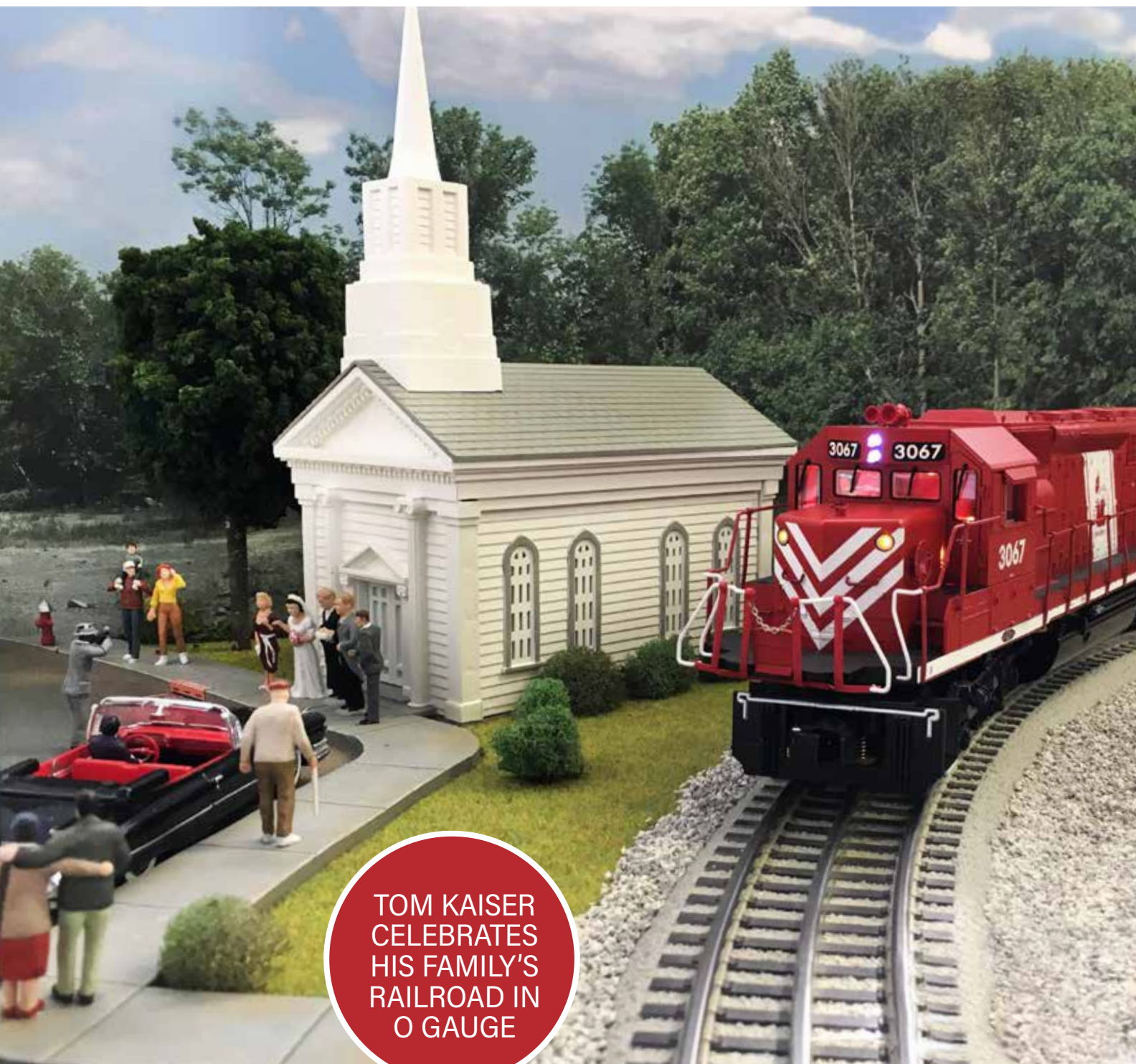
Time to plant the tree. If planting it in Styrofoam, push the tree base in. If the ground is hard, you may need to use an ice pick to make the hole. You may wish to secure the tree in place with a few drops of white glue. I do not because I may change my mind on where I want it on my home layout.

A final point to consider. If you're modeling winter, the best snow is baking soda. It is fine, sticks well, and keeps spiders and cobwebs from your layout. Start by applying a fine mist of hair spray to your tree.

Then put the baking soda in a tea strainer and hold it over the tree while tapping the top edge of the strainer. It will dispense a fine layer of baking soda and may even look like it has been snowing. **CT**

*Time to give credit where credit is due: I learned this tree-making process from my friend and mentor Jon Addison. He got it from Duane Danielson.*





TOM KAISER  
CELEBRATES  
HIS FAMILY'S  
RAILROAD IN  
O GAUGE

# CNJ RUNS IN THIS





**T**here's a select group of model railroaders whose members have made periodic appearances in the pages of *Classic Toy Trains* from the start. What sets them apart is something enviable: They have a direct family connection to a full-size railroad.

David Dowdman and Vernon Hart come to mind thanks to the fact that both outstanding O gauge modelers were employed as locomotive engineers. Others in this tiny fraternity boasted of a father or grandfather who worked on a railroad.

Add Tom Kaiser to this gathering. He remembers fondly his grandpa in the cab of a steam engine or a first-generation diesel, handling the locomotive with ease in a yard or on the main line of the Central Railroad of New Jersey. Tom's memories have influenced the superb 10½ x 11-foot L-shaped three-rail layout he recently completed. Every square inch honors his grandfather and the fallen flag he represented with distinction.

### IN HIS BLOOD

Tom feels instinctively the presence of his grandfather, Howard Eriksen, every time he ventures into the room added to the new residence his wife Ginny found for the couple not long after they decided the time was right to downsize. The previous owner was responsible for the addition, and Tom knew it would be ideal for the three-rail display he wanted to build.

Recollections of his grandpa and the

railroad whose locomotives he operated led Tom back to a hobby he left 40 years before. Around 2006, though, he felt driven to pick up toy trains again and bring to life on an O gauge layout what he remembered about the engines and rolling stock of his favorite prototype railroad.

Besides the Jersey Central, another line had touched his childhood in the 1950s. Tom has in mind, of course, the Lionel Lines, the same fictitious railroad that touched millions of boys and girls during the post-World War II period. It entered his life fairly early, as Tom was barely 3 years old on Christmas morning of 1953,

when his father presented him with a Lionel O-27 set.

Yep, Tom's dad was probably as important as his grandfather in making trains central to his life. Whether Tom's blood ran orange and blue for Lionel or green and yellow or red and white for the Jersey Central remained a matter of debate we can leave to his primary physician. All

he knows is that he loved every kind of train when he was growing up.

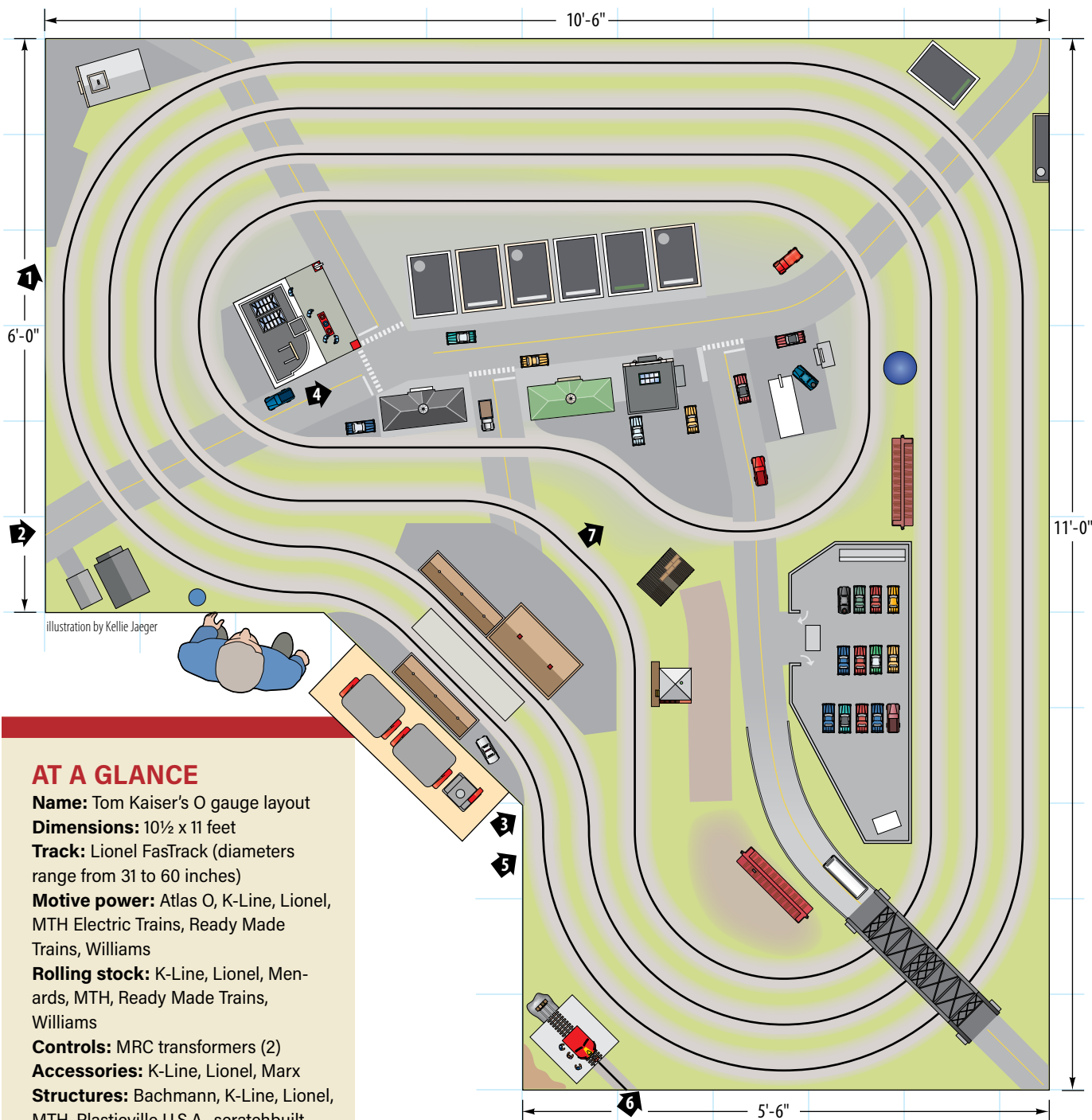
After getting Tom a Lionel No. 1479WS steam freight outfit, his father constructed a terrific home for that train, which Lionel named the "Speedy Hot-Shot Steam Freight." In addition to an oval of track, the 4 x 8-foot O gauge layout featured a passing loop with two switches and Nos. 252 Automatic Crossing Gates, 145 Automatic Gateman, 450 Signal Bridge, and 356 Operating Freight Station, along with lots of Plasticville structures.



Tom Kaiser

**1** Let's hope the fellow being paid to shoot photographs of the bride and groom walking out of the church on Tom Kaiser's three-rail tribute to the Central Railroad of New Jersey isn't a fanatic about trains. He may end up ignoring the newly married couple so he can snap the Lionel No. 28224 CNJ SD40-2 decked out in the striking paint scheme that led railfans to nickname the impressive EMD road diesel "Red Baron."

# MODELER'S BLOOD



## AT A GLANCE

**Name:** Tom Kaiser's O gauge layout

**Dimensions:** 10½ x 11 feet

**Track:** Lionel FasTrack (diameters range from 31 to 60 inches)

**Motive power:** Atlas O, K-Line, Lionel, MTH Electric Trains, Ready Made Trains, Williams

**Rolling stock:** K-Line, Lionel, Menards, MTH, Ready Made Trains, Williams

**Controls:** MRC transformers (2)

**Accessories:** K-Line, Lionel, Marx

**Structures:** Bachmann, K-Line, Lionel, MTH, Plasticville U.S.A., scratchbuilt

**Vehicles:** American Heritage Models, Corgi, Dinky Toys, Eagles Race, Eastwood Automobilia, Ertl, First Gear, Greenlight, Hallmark, Hongwell, Hot Wheels, Jada Toys, Johnny Lightning, Maisto, Matchbox, Mini Champs, Motor Max, MTH, New Ray, Road Champs, Road Signature, Schuco, Spec Cast, Sun Star, Toy Zone, Unique Collectibles, Welly, Yat Ming

**Figures:** Artista, Bachmann, K-Line, Life-Like, Model Works, Scenic Express, Woodland Scenics

Tom Kaiser's O gauge display consists of four independent loops. K-Line, Lionel, MTH, and Plasticville structures dominate his fictitious town located in New Jersey. The numbered arrows correspond to the numbers in each of the captioned photos.

"I distinctly remember the feel of the transformer, the weight of the engine, and the smell that permeated the room," Tom says. "All the Plasticville buildings were wired with Christmas lights. It was, as we used to say, 'the cat's meow!'"

## SOMETHING AMBITIOUS

Just as his grandfather would drive his locomotive slowly out of a yard before

accelerating once on the main, so did Tom progress in a gradual way once he had made a commitment to rejoining his model railroad associates. What started after an unplanned visit with buddies to a show in 2006, soon led to a small layout.

The only space available in the Kaisers' previous home happened to be in the family room. Tom accepted what real estate he could claim and constructed a 6 x 10½-foot





**2** The great Central Railroad of New Jersey never looked finer or more prosperous than it does hauling freight and travelers on Tom's three-rail tribute to the regional line.

O gauge display. He knew that it would be only temporary; however, working on it taught him some important lessons and helped refine his skills at laying track and wiring a transformer and accessories.

Once settled in their new home, Tom felt more than gratified with the spare room and looked forward to building a tribute to the Central RR of New Jersey. Having designed the benchwork from his first layout to be easily disassembled, he incorporated it into the new and larger display to save on time and materials.

In specific terms, Tom set about reassembling the walls of the previous layout constructed from 2 x 3s and the top constructed from 2 x 4s for added strength. Then a new 5 x 5½-foot addition was built, thereby creating an L-shaped layout.

Then came a layer of ½" plywood, followed by a layer of Homasote of equal thickness (both screwed in place) to bring the height of the layout to 37" above the floor. Tom finished everything with indoor/outdoor carpeting. "My plan," he explained, "was to use the carpet to reduce the track noise produced by my trains and to act as the "loop" side of Velcro for securing my scenery panels."

Four loops of Lionel FasTrack went on as smoothly and quickly as Tom could hope. Their diameters range from 31" all



**3** Intelligent use of vehicles, figures, signs, and details along the right-of-way gives visitors to the Kaiser household good reason to check out the many terrific vignettes Tom has created. Punsters point out that trains remain the central attractions on his layout!

the way up to 60". Not particularly fancy, especially when you consider there are no turnouts, but Tom preferred space for scenery over turnouts.

### SCENERY PATTERNS

In Tom's words, "ease" and "flexibility" should be uppermost when making scenery. He wants the process to be enjoyable and rewarding, so he can in

quickly add the landforms, vegetation, and more he believes will enhance the appearance of his layout while providing the right setting for his Jersey Central trains to look most impressive. For Tom, these trains are the star performers.

Once Tom had figured out where to lay the track, he took a large roll of 36"-wide wrapping paper and flipped it over to make good use of the unprinted side. He made





**4** Painted lines dividing the street and indicating parking spaces and crosswalks enhance the main drag in Kaiersville. Memories of growing up in postwar New Jersey guided Tom as he thoughtfully added manhole covers, telephone poles, and mailboxes.



**5** Looks like the engineer in the CNJ Alco RS3 from MTH is braking to watch the screen at the local drive-in theater. The classic cars in the lot put on as good a show as the movie.

templates by tracing all the areas inside the loops (that is, the inner edge of the Fas-Track roadbed) so he would be able to locate various scenic effects as well as the accessories and structures he had in mind.

Tom transferred the templates to sheets of dark gray matboard (the color mimics the paved streets and parking lots he envisioned). He traced the footprint of each building's location using a white colored pencil, followed by the sidewalk around it.

The next step involved taking a hobby knife with a sharp blade and cutting the marked outline of that matboard panel. Tom worked on one panel at a time, masking the road stripes and crosswalks until he was ready to add them with acrylic paints from a crafts store.

Other tips to share? "I cut all the sidewalks out of white foam core," Tom says. "In addition, I embossed the joint lines in the 'concrete' with a sharp pencil. I made sure not to press too hard so I didn't puncture the paper skin of the foam core. After painting them with a light gray craft paint, I added light cracks in the 'concrete' before gluing them in place with white glue."

When Tom had finished each matboard panel, he added ½" x 3" Velcro strips ("the hook side," he says). Eventually, he secured each of them to the indoor/outdoor carpeting he had previously placed on top of the layer of Homasote. Lastly, he spread on a mix consisting of two colors of rubber track ballast marketed by Brummy until he had covered all edges of the matboard panels.

"The purpose of this final step," Tom states, "is to create a more natural and realistic appearance. Also, if I ever want to change something or dismantle my layout, all I need to do is vacuum up the ballast, lift off the structures, and lightly peel off the panels. Then I'm ready to start over."

Tom's approach to scenery definitely sounds like it's worth emulating. Again, ease and flexibility dictate his choices of techniques and materials.

## FOCUS ON STRUCTURES

While landscaping on Tom's tribute to the Jersey Central can be described as straightforward and even low-key, his perspective on buildings is anything but. He likes investigating what residential, commercial, and industrial structures are on the market and deciding which ones will improve the look of his railroad. Then he sets out to upgrade their appearance.





Bachmann, K-Line, Lionel, MTH, and Plasticville provide the different buildings Tom has arranged on his layout. He also has developed a few from scratch, and these bring him tremendous satisfaction. For pleasure, he has wired among them operating items from K-Line and Lionel; visitors love the animation and magic.

Not surprisingly, picking out which structures to add represents the first and not the final stage of work. Tom generally repaints their exterior, particularly the vintage Plasticville kits, to gently transform their look from fanciful to realistic. He will, in addition, often add details, ranging from roof fans to windows to interior lighting to signs and advertising on the windows and outer walls.

Scratchbuilt items include the used car dealership and the drive-in movie theater and lot based on a real facility known throughout the southern half of New Jersey. Of special meaning to Tom is the former crew car being used as an office by Jersey Central crews. He developed it on his own and has made it a focal point of the layout.

## ALWAYS CHANGING

Some aspects of Tom's slick layout remain constant: the feel of his hometown of Scotch Plains, N.J.; the emphasis on Lionel trains and products; and the goal of honoring his grandfather's association with the Jersey Central. Accomplishing these goals remains essential to Tom, and visitors tell him how well he has done all of this and more. People walk into his train room and start grinning as they look at the details and signs and recall life as it once was in the Garden State.

But other elements of the railroad keep changing, and Tom wouldn't have it any other way. "I wanted to give my layout its own identity," he declares. One neat way of doing so was switching letters in his surname to get "Kaiers" and using it to create the imaginary municipality of Kaiersville. Tom never stops putting different businesses on the layout that use its name.

Another method for ensuring life in Kaiersville goes on changing relates to the vehicles parked on the streets and highways. "I refuse to limit the time period," Tom says. "Sometimes I'll put cars from the 1940s near coupes and station wagons from 20 years later." Figures can also suggest various eras, depending on how they're attired and what they're holding.



**6** The smell of hotdogs and hamburgers on the grill has caused the fellow driving the CNJ speeder to shut off the motor so he can grab lunch. Many residents are eating at the picnic tables outside, as they take advantage of a sunny day in March.



**7** A switcher just dropped off the boxcar and porthole caboose. The engineer needs to deliver a tank car filled with gasoline to a petroleum dealer on the other side of Kaiersville. He should be back to pick up these two pieces of rolling stock before the carpenters working on the house nearby have laid down their tools for the day.

Tom gets serious whenever he's talking about linking his outstanding home layout with his family and his own past. At the same time, though, he doesn't get too serious about demanding that his trains and

structures be overly realistic. "There's no right or wrong way to make a toy train layout," he reminds viewers. "Just go for what you like and always make sure that you're having fun." **CTT**





Contributing Editor Chris Montagna built this O gauge mountain diorama for a display case put in an elementary school. His tips will help you plan and build your own project.



# BUILD A DIORAMA

TRY A SMALLER SCALE  
PROJECT INSTEAD OF  
A FULL LAYOUT

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CHRIS MONTAGNA



**D**ioramas are a great way to learn construction skills without needing the space or budget for a layout. I built my first diorama two years ago, when I wanted to add a mountain scene to the upper loop of my O gauge layout. Let me share this project's process with you.

I built the project in my garage, where I could move it to reach all sides without injuring my back or my knees. It also enabled me to view the scene in natural sunlight as I worked on it. This process kept my layout free from mess and disarray. I've used these methods to complete two of three mountain sections for my layout, and I'm thrilled with the results.

### BENEFITS OF DIORAMAS

Dioramas let you experiment with scenes and techniques without making a huge commitment. I decided to build one of a crossing on the Strasburg RR in Pennsylvania. This allowed me to visit an actual location and work on recreating it in O gauge. I could practice using static grass, field effects, and scratchbuilding. Building a diorama allows you the flexibility to add scenic elements to it, including trees, people, animals, and buildings, and then take off those same elements to add to your final layout when you're ready to do so.

Dioramas also enable you to experiment with new products. Woodland Scenics released a traffic light system, so I was able to build a small intersection, add the lights to see how they look, and access how close to the curb they should be installed. I didn't have to drill a hole in my layout's sidewalks that might have been in the wrong location.

Finally, dioramas are great for showing off your collection. Their small size and light weight let you move them outside for natural lighting and better photography.

### DESIGN PLAN

Knowing your diorama's purpose is key. If you're recreating a scene, the vision is there for you to work with; you just need to get that scene into the correct proportions. If you're building a unique scene, you must know its purpose and how it should function.

This project was for a diorama that I would build in my garage and then transport to an elementary school to be put in a display case there. I had a set amount of space, and I was the one funding the project.

Moreover, I knew the audience (children and school staff) would not be critical of small details, so I chose not to include too many intricate items.

To create the illusion that the train came through the walls on either end of the diorama, I had the line of track appear to disappear. To enhance the visual appeal of the diorama, I made the centerpiece a bridge traversing a ravine between two tree-covered mountains.

### SUPPLY LIST

**Plywood or wood base**  
**Wood glue**  
**White glue**  
**Rust-Oleum Camouflage Khaki paint**  
**Plaster cloth**  
**Cardboard**  
**Sculptamold**  
**Paper towels**  
**Spray bottle of water (optional)**  
**Liquid dishwashing detergent**  
**Earth-colored latex or acrylic paint**  
**Artist's gesso**  
**Black tempera powder**  
**Small sponge**  
**Ground cover**  
**Track**  
**Ballast**  
**Trees**  
**Woodland Scenics Water, Water Tints, and Water Effects**

### STARTING WORK

This display case measured 64" wide, 13" deep, and about 40" high.

These limitations meant depth would be a challenge. I used ¾"-thick plywood as the base.

Because this diorama was fairly high, I added a front, back, and sides to the base by ripping the plywood to 3½" and 6" for the back. For the front, I used a jigsaw to cut out an arch in the front board where the lower waterfall would eventually be. (1)

I used 2 x 4s and other pieces of scrap wood for the track risers, supports, and base. Once these were in place, I test-fit the bridge and built the abutments out of scrap pine. I used a miter saw to cut the angles and a bandsaw to cut the out-

line of the sides. (2)

I secured them with yellow carpenter's glue. After the glue had dried, I added brads for an even tighter and more secure connection. Then I lightly sprayed the wood with Rust-Oleum No. 1917830 Camouflage Khaki paint. Once the first coat had dried, I used a straightedge and a utility knife to cut rough expansion joints in the abutments before adding a second coat of paint.



**1** Chris started his O gauge diorama project by building the frame, wood risers, and track subroadbed from plywood, 2 x 4 sections, and pieces of scrap wood he had on hand.



**2** Next, Chris built bridge abutments from ¾"-thick plywood and secured everything using wood glue. Then he spray-painted the abutments with Rust-Oleum Camouflage Khaki.



**3** Cardboard strips form the framework for the mountain and the valley on the diorama. The truss bridge is set in place temporarily to check for fit as well as clearance.



**4** Chris built the landscape base using plaster cloth. After the first layer of cloth was down, he added a second layer made from paper towels and then put even more plaster cloth on top.

Due to space restrictions I realized I would need a retaining wall on the front of the display. I started by adding two sections of Scenic Express No. FL6150 Pennsy Stone Wall to the front of the diorama. I used hot glue to set them in place flush with the front border.

### FORMING THE LANDSCAPE

I originally was going to form the base of the mountain out of pink insulation foam, but I changed my plan based on the quantity of foam board I would need. Instead, I used a cardboard weave method, something modelers in small scales often use. I cut 1" cardboard strips using a utility knife and scissors (a great way to get rid of old boxes!), wove them together, and hot-glued them in place to form the outline of the mountain. (3)

With the cardboard "frame" finished, I added wood supports for the tunnel portals and set them in place. You can buy or make portals; my friend and fellow modeler Charlie Stoia laser-cut mine.

Next, I added plaster cloth over the cardboard. This process usually takes a few layers of plaster cloth to get a solid base. To add strength to it while using less cloth, I put a wet paper towel over the bottom layer of plaster cloth. I left gaps in the cardboard area where I planned to add rock molds later. (4 and 5)

### A ROCKY PLACE

I adopted the method for making rock molds that modeler Eric Siegel shows on his YouTube Channel, *Eric's Trains*. The latex molds came from Bragdon Enterprises. I used a two-part plastic resin and

then followed it with a two-part foam mixture. After the mixture had set up, I released the rocks from the molds, cut them as needed, and secured them in place with hot glue. I also secured rock molds to the interior walls of the tunnel.

I made sure to add more plaster cloth to fill any gaps between the rocks and the other plaster cloth base. Once the plaster cloth had dried, it was time to add some Sculptamold. I like Sculptamold because it lets you create more elevation changes in your scene. I used a thin layer over all the plaster cloth. In addition, I used it to create a depression for the riverbed.

Because Sculptamold begins to dry quickly after being applied, I suggest having on hand a spray bottle filled with water to rehydrate it as you work it into the scene. You should spray it and smooth out any bumps. Once the Sculptamold was in place, I gave it lots of time to dry — 24 to 72 hours — depending on the humidity in my garage. (6)

I painted the Sculptamold exterior with brown and dark green latex paints I had available. Next, I painted the riverbed a dark shade of blue. If you're looking to make the river the focal point of your diorama, consider airbrushing the edges of the river to feather the colors and then fade to darker blue and lighter brown at the shoreline.

For coloring the rocks I started with a coat of artist's gesso. After it had dried, I brushed black tempera powder over the rocks. I next took a wet sponge and pressed it onto the rocks. It mixed with the black powder to create shades of black

## SEASONAL FUN



The diorama display changes with each season. This photo shows a Halloween scene with spider webs and a Halloween train, along with fall foliage. A *Polar Express* train appears around the holidays, and a Disney *Frozen* train arrives early in January.





**5** The scenery is starting to take shape. Note the Scenic Express Pennsy Stone Wall on the front walls. Chris painted the wood section under the stone wall with black paint.



**6** A partially finished scene. Rocks and Sculptamold are in place, and one section has been painted. The truss bridge is set in place temporarily.

and gray. (7) Last, I added diluted browns and other hues to match the rock formations I had created.

Once the rocks had dried, it was time to add ground cover. For the diorama, I used a mix of Woodland Scenics blends plus a blend of fine and coarse ground cover purchased from Brennan's Model Railroading. When adding ground cover to steep slopes, I first sprayed the base with a mix of water and liquid dishwashing detergent to help the foam stick on. I finished by spraying on diluted white glue.

Then it was time to "plant" trees: Scenic Express No. EX0214 Super Trees and inexpensive conifer trees I bought at a local hobby shop. I added shrubs around rocks and wherever I noticed gaps in the ground cover, especially where it abutted the tunnel portal.

## ADDING WATER EFFECTS

I created the river scene using Woodland Scenics products, in particular No. C1212 Water Effects. I placed small stones in the dry riverbed before adding the water resin. I mixed the resin with a few drops of Woodland Scenics No. CW4525 Murky Tint and then carefully added it to the riverbed in shallow pours. On this project, the river slopes forward, so I tilted the entire diorama to create a level surface and then taped the waterfall end with painter's tape to create a barrier to hold the resin in place as it dried.

For the waterfall, I used Woodland Scenics Water Effects and spread it on a



**7** A variety of trees covered the landscape. To add forced perspective and create depth, Chris used taller trees in front and smaller trees toward the back.

piece of glass. I make certain to do this in vertical lines, so it resembled falling water. Once it had dried, I dry-brushed on some highlights and used a razor to peel it off the glass surface.

I added a line of Water Effects at the top of the waterfall to secure the dried water effects in place. To make the water seem to be "flowing" over the top of the rockface, I cut a clear plastic disposable cup in half and placed it under the dried water effects.

Finally, I installed the

bridge and track. For this diorama I used Atlas two-rail track to line up with the Atlas No. 7920 Pratt Truss Bridge. I ran the track into each tunnel, where it terminated. I ballasted the track and glued the ballast in place. Then I finished by spraying the display with diluted white glue to secure all the ground cover.

The diorama came together nicely and has been a hit with students and staff alike. I plan to change the foliage with the seasons and add snow for winter. In the meantime, I suggest you follow my suggestions to create a special diorama of your own. **CTT**

**GET MORE  
O GAUGE  
ACTION ON  
THE CHRIS'S  
TRAINS &  
THINGS  
CHANNEL ON  
YOUTUBE.**

# HOW DID THAT ONE GET AWAY?

MISSING OUT ON A UNIQUE LIONEL NO. 151 SEMAPHORE

STORY BY ROGER CARP



**E**very toy train enthusiast who has been involved in the hobby for more than 10 minutes will confess to having a story about the prize that got away. Like individuals who fish, collectors and dealers alike will admit to having let something amazing slip through their fingers. They let their mind do a little wandering or moved just a tad too slowly and thus missed out on a treasure.

That unlucky guy turned out to be me a few months ago. With a red face and shattered pride, let me share my embarrassment. To get the tale of sadness and woe started, I'll admit it relates to the humble Lionel No. 151 Semaphore.

## A LITTLE BACKGROUND

I should probably backtrack a little bit first. Therefore, I'll prolong my story of disappointment by offering some background information about the 151.

**Are your eyes and brain sufficiently agile to discern key differences in these three examples of the Lionel No. 151 Semaphore? The desirable variation on the left has a green-painted base; the most common signal is placed next to its box in the middle. As for the scarce model on the right, well, go ahead and read how it left Senior Editor Roger Carp more than a little heartbroken.** Models courtesy Joe Algozzini/Photo by William Zuback

Lionel's ubiquitous semaphore signals made their debut in the cataloged lineup for 1947 and remained popular members of the roster through 1969, the final year of the post-World War II era of production. During that two-decade span, Lionel must have produced tens of thousands of the out-of-proportion trackside items.

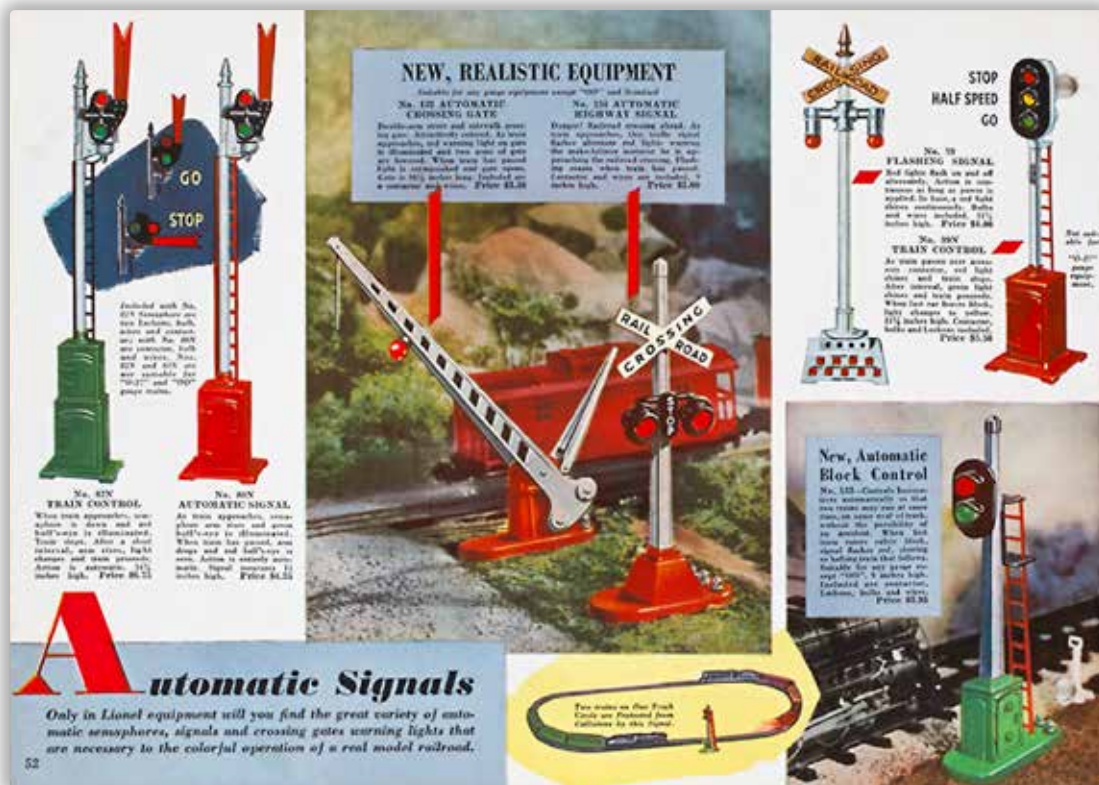
Collectors and operators of O-27 and O gauge trains from that period can easily tell you all about how the 151 Semaphore functions and what it looks like. To put it simply, the 9¾"-high model generally came with a black base, a silver post (initially, it was painted silver; later it was aluminum left unpainted), and a yellow-painted blade with either a raised or a recessed black "V" in it.

There's nothing special about these common variations of the 151. Yes, the first version, which came with a green base like the one used on No. 153 Block Signals, does elicit excitement from Lionel enthusiasts. (One in like-new condition recently sold at an online auction for \$370.) Generally speaking, folks in the Lionel world are blasé about the 151 Semaphores at shows and auctions.

## BACK TO THE STORY

Now that you know everything — or almost everything — about the 151, let me resume my story. I had woken up early one morning, right before dawn, and could not get back to sleep. But what could I do now? Rather than drive to the





gym so early, I decided to walk upstairs and turn on my computer. Bored and still quite drowsy, I figured the most mindless activity I could engage in while waiting for my coffee to cool off was check Lionel postwar listings on eBay.

Nothing caught my eye — not a freight car or locomotive to interest me at all. Oh, there was a 151 with a battered box, but it meant nothing to me. Besides, the photographs were blurry. I moved on until something deep in my brain said to me: “The blade on the 151 didn’t look yellow; maybe it’s the scarce red one!”

## ANOTHER DIGRESSION

What was I hearing? In the late 1940s, perhaps in 1947 or ’48, Lionel released a small number of 151s with a red-painted blade instead of the usual yellow one. Enough of the scarce items have surfaced over the years for collectors to consider them legitimate variations worth much more than ordinary models.

The consensus among hobbyists is that semaphores with red blades were intended by Lionel for the market in Mexico. It’s an interesting observation, even though no documentation has surfaced to substantiate that claim. It’s also worth noting that full-size railroads in Mexico did not use semaphores with red blades. To be sure a few railroads in the northeastern region of

the United States did have them, but only for a few years.

But before World War II, the O gauge semaphores made by Lionel (Nos. 80N and 82N) did have blades painted red. Maybe the firm planned to follow suit after the war, only to abandon the plan very quickly. Having finished a small quantity, it decided to market them.

## FINISHING THE TALE

Okay, you can probably guess the rest. My brain snapped to attention as I scrolled back to find the listing with the blurry pictures of the 151, which I did remember was offered as a “Buy It Now” item for \$29.95 — an amount that I calculated was about 5% of the current value of a Lionel 151 with a red blade.

There it was! I slammed down the key on my computer in hopes the scarce

**Possibly, Lionel released 151 Semaphores with red blades because the O gauge semaphores the firm cataloged right before World War II had entirely red blades.**

trackside accessory was still available, only to learn someone else had purchased it a minute or two earlier. A postwar treasure that might have been mine had I been slightly more awake, more aware of my surroundings, and quicker to strike.

But this is the nature of the toy train hobby and any leisure-time pursuit involving collectibles. I hope someday to have a second chance to acquire a 151 Semaphore with a red blade, even if I have to pay the current and ongoing value.

Before signing off, may I request that you cast aside your own wounded pride and share your tales of the toy train beauties and treasures that somehow got away? We can reveal some of the best (or saddest) stories in future issues. **CTT**



## LEARN MORE

The stories behind more than 100 popular Lionel postwar locomotives, rolling stock, and accessories are revealed in *Collectible Lionel Classics*, for sale at [Shop.Trains.com](http://Shop.Trains.com)

# *Make your layout* **ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE!**

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
PETER H. RIDDLE**

**W**henever I design a toy train layout — and I've constructed several for O as well as Wide or Standard gauge trains over the past half a century — I intend for it to be accessible to everyone. I have in mind more than youngsters and adults. I'm also thinking about visitors who may be disabled or infirm. I want folks who use a wheelchair or a walker to be able to view distant points on a large model railroad. Many of you probably share my goals of kindness and hospitality.

So, let me provide you with eight simple and smart tips for developing a model railroad you can open to all your relatives and friends, even those who are less mobile. These ideas will help you design a layout that leaves no one frustrated or disappointed they couldn't enjoy your finest modeling and best trains. The photographs accompanying this article show an O gauge railroad exemplifying my techniques.

Longtime CTT contributor Peter H. Riddle designed his latest O gauge model railroad to accommodate visitors who may have a disability. Among the features evident here are an entryway reached without having to use stairs, lightweight tables standing lower to the floor and having wider-than-typical aisles, and accessible main lines.





# 1 One entry without stairs

Your train room should have at least one entry without stairs. Mine has a ground-level doorway that leads in directly from outside. The interior doorway connects to the basement of my home, which is accessed by a flight of stairs. If that stairway turned out to be the only way to reach my train room, I would give serious consideration to installing an electric stair lift.

# 2 Lower table height

Most modelers build layouts fairly high to provide easy viewing when standing and adequate headroom underneath while doing the wiring. I made mine 31" off the floor to provide good visibility for wheelchair-bound observers and operators. This limited clearance does make sitting on the floor beneath the tables uncomfortable, so I installed most of the wiring while lying on a wheeled garage dolly. Disabled builders may want to place wiring on the top surface and hide it with scenery.

# 3 Lightweight tables

Modelers with limited physical capabilities should make their tables as light as possible. I built 4 x 8-foot tables using 2 x 4-foot foam insulation panels that are 2 inches thick. I glued them side by side. As for the framing, I used 1 x 3-inch pine boards mounted on folding legs. These tables are sturdy, easily moved, and large enough to accommodate curved track as wide as 84" in diameter. I also made a 16-foot-long train yard out of two more 4 x 8-foot foam insulation panels laid end to end.





## 4 Wider aisles

Walkers and most wheelchairs are designed to let users navigate through spaces at least 32" wide. However, a full 36" is more comfortable for them, especially with corners to negotiate. An unobstructed, smooth-surfaced floor is desirable. Every part of the layout should be within easy reach — no more than 30" from an edge. Aisles should be arranged so you can approach the tables from at least three sides. My 8' trestle bridge can be lifted out for easier access to the train yard.

## 5 Easy access to trains and accessories

All parts of the 48"-wide table can be reached by a seated person from one side or another. The yard is adjacent to a wall and so was kept to a width of 24" since it can't be reached from the opposite side. For economy and simplicity of wiring, all six turnouts in this area are manually operated and placed no more than 18" from the edge. The Lionel FastTrack switches (both remote control and manual) are automatically non-derailing.



Note the wider aisles between tables plus the main lines and sidings placed near edges. The scenery has greater detailing so visitors can spend time studying it.

## 6 Using the edges

Accessories are easiest to enjoy and operate when they're located close to the edge of the layout. This is especially true of such units as the Lionel No. 362 Barrel Loader that often requires hands-on attention to keep the barrels moving smoothly. Some accessories are less prone to needing attention, such as the Lionel No. 164 Log Loader in the middle. Its larger size makes it easier to see from a greater distance, although at 18" from the aisle in front it's still within reach.

## 7 Grouped controllers

Most of the controllers needed for operating lights, switches, uncouplers, and so forth are grouped near the transformers. In some cases, though, I found it made more sense to locate them on the side of the layout near their accessories. In one spot, I arranged specific push buttons, a slide switch, and an unload/uncouple box where an operator would likely be watching the accessories while operating them. Wiring them beside the transformer would have left those controllers too far away.

## 8 Greater detailing

Persons in wheelchairs — much like children — are at an ideal level to enjoy close-up viewing. They deserve a variety of scenic details to capture their interest. Small and realistic details that may be lost or overlooked on a large layout stand out when they're seen close to eye level. The best part about this tip, like all the others here, is that it will improve the appearance and level of interest of virtually any model railroad, regardless of size or scale. And isn't that everyone's goal? **CTT**





Visitors, regardless of their age, enjoy watching and operating freight loaders, light towers and other classic accessories. Peter Riddle made sure to locate them near edges and have their controllers wired near them.

## More layout planning tips

**You have a spare room** and would like to construct an O or S gauge layout. What's next? Before you start building, we want to share this list of what to consider first.

**Assess the room or space you're using for your layout.** Do you want to upgrade room lighting or paint the walls before you begin your project? What kind of access do you have for bringing in lumber and benchwork supplies? What kind of items will you need to work around (windows, doorways, outlets, water heater, and support posts)?

**What's your budget?** It's important to factor in all costs of building a layout, not just the track. Lumber, paint, scenery supplies, roadbed, structures, and more can add up quickly. Shopping for used equipment in hobby stores or at train shows can save you money. However, it will take more time to find what you're looking for. You may want to prioritize your money for certain projects (buying new track and running used equipment, for example).

**Consider your skill set.** Perhaps you'd prefer to buy premade benchwork if you

don't have woodworking skills. Maybe you can trade projects with a hobbyist friend who has skills that you lack. He or she can build your benchwork while you weather their structures or rolling stock.

**Do you want to construct the layout in sections** in case you want to expand the track plan later or possibly move to another location? Will the layout be up against a wall or two? Or will it be freestanding?

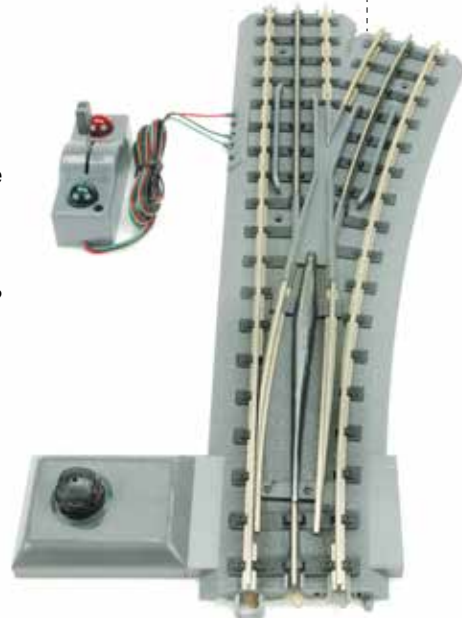
**Consider the type of track.** Do you have a bunch of tubular track you'd like to use again, or would you prefer track with built-in roadbed, like Lionel FasTrack? Do you prefer the more realistic look of Atlas or GarGraves?

**Use the widest diameter curves your track plan can accommodate.** Trains look more graceful running through wider curves. Are larger engines on your wish list? Those often need wider curves to navigate through.

**Switches can eat up space fast.** Buy a single switch first and use it to sketch out your yard on the tabletop. Consider placement of your switch wiring beforehand.

—Rene Schweitzer and Bob Keller

The track you plan on using is so important when planning a layout. Many O gaugers like this Lionel FasTrack.



# Get a lift

As a bridge line in northern New Jersey, the Delaware & Raritan Valley RR welcomes all kinds of run-through power. That includes this new BNSF General Electric ES44AC road diesel, seen passing over the double spans of the lift-up the author built.



## ADD A LIFT-OUT SECTION TO YOUR LAYOUT FOR EASY ACCESS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY STAN TRZONIEC

**M**any years ago, I built the layout of my dreams. Called the Delaware & Raritan Valley RR, a name that has been with me since 1955, it took up about 700 square foot of space. I made sure it had just about every accessory made positioned in just the right spot.

My wife and I have downsized. While we looked for smaller quarters I took down the D&RV. We've settled into our new home, and I'm at work on a "donut" type of O gauge layout to be 12 feet square with each section no more than 24" wide.

Instead of the popups I relied on when younger to reach every area on the D&RV, I wanted something simpler. So I engineered a section of the layout I can lift up for easy access to the center and the controls. It came together easily and quickly (**photo 1**).

The best way to use the bridge is to raise it up for entry. Building it so it opens downward, while good for keeping the rail gaps close, may end up constricting the area for passage. Building a door-like arrangement, while sensible, will be a lot of work. So

also is removing this section each and every time you decide to use it. That's why I strongly advise you to follow my tips and insights on raising it up and down for entry.

### START CUTTING

Since any part of my layout is 24" wide, I made the opening 26½" long. To keep the lift light yet sturdy, I used 1 x 4 pine for the framing (wood left over from my previous layout) and a 2 x 4 for support in the middle. I made sure both sides of the opening were level, true, and square to at least ⅜" and no more than ¼" from each end (**photo 2**).

I attached a lip to the benchwork to support the lift while I made adjustments and to help with positioning the hinges (**photo 3**). Then I built the frame for the plywood and Homasote. As shown in (**photo 4**), it measured 24½" long and 21½" wide.

Next I installed a piece of plywood and then the Homasote to 26" (**photo 5**). I left a ¼" space on each end (**photo 6**). I added





When installing a lift-up between two sections of the benchwork on an O gauge railroad, it is important to make sure everything on both sides is level and square.



Once Stan was satisfied with the dimensions of the opening, he installed a piece of 1 x 4 wood on each side to hold the bridge as he worked on the framework and hinges.



Laying the frame on the lip ensured that everything matched up with the plywood and Homasote. To keep the weight down, Stan used 1 x 4 pine with a 2 x 4 middle support.



Stan next cut a piece of plywood matching the thickness of his benchwork. He made sure that it met the level of the plywood on both sides and left a small gap for up-and-down motion.



Installing the Homasote came next. Stan made sure it matched the ends and left the same gap so the bridge had room to move.



Stan installed hinges so the bridge would pivot upward. As he did so, he made certain nothing was loose. He also checked that everything was level by placing a piece of track across both sections.



With the mainline tracks coming in from the left, Stan needed to know that they would center up between the twin spans. Then he secured the track on the lift-up.



Once Stan had everything square and level, he could attach the track to the ends of both sections with a gap to allow movement. Screws make certain that his O gauge tracks would stay aligned.





On the other side, Stan extended the tracks so they would overlap the benchwork on the other side. This made for a tighter gap and better alignment where the tracks raise and lower.



For power on the lift bridge section, Stan installed a set of braided and stranded wires with plenty of slack to avoid breakage.



Using Lionel truss bridges for appearance, Stan next masked off the areas to make it easier to pour ballast on the inside of the bridge.



Stan applied plenty of diluted glue so the ballast would stay in place when the lift-up was moved up and down.



After the ballast had set, Stan removed the tape and carefully painted under the bridge. He used a draw-lock catch to lock the lift down and tight against the other side of the opening.

the hinges next, as shown in (photo 7). (Next, I test-fit a piece of track to check the level between the two (photo 8).

## INSTALLATION

Now I was ready to install the track right up to the ends, leaving  $\frac{3}{16}$ " on the hinge side for lifting room. Since I'm working with a three-rail system, I polished the cut ends of the track for a smooth transition of the pickup rollers over this gap (photo 9).

On the other side, I extended the track over the edge of the

lift, cutting it to allow only  $\frac{1}{4}$ " or less between the two (photo 10). I installed a chain to keep the unit up (photo 11), along with a draw-lock catch (shown at the top) to keep the bridge nice and tight against the opposite side of the opening.

For power over the bridge, I used braided and stranded wire with sufficient slack to curtail the movement that might lead to breakage sometime in the future (photo 12).

I added two truss bridges, taping off the area where the bridge goes to keep ballast in line as I glued it down (photo 13). Use plenty of scenery cement to keep the ballast in place, as you'll be raising and lowering the bridge quite often (photo 14).

## SCENIC ELEMENTS

After removing the tape, I was free to paint close to the bridge, which I had installed with common wire ties. I applied a good coat of paint followed by Woodland Scenics fine turf grass (T1345 or T45). I wanted the grass to be absorbed by the paint and keep it — like the ballast — from shifting during movement. Then it was time to secure trees in position.

After I landscaped between the truss bridges with fine brown turf (Woodland Scenics T1342 or T42), I took an old toy truck and made tire tracks to simulate an access road used by the railroad. Although it is not a true lift bridge, I thought it would look better if I added a tower on one end to simulate the operation.

A small project like this one can be challenging to conceive or start. I hope this article will pave the way for an important access port on your railroad. **CTT**





The author built a replica of the detailed version of the Lionel No. 2465 Sunoco double-dome tank car that was illustrated in the consumer catalog for 1946 (below) by adding ladders and railings.

# DETAILING A LIONEL TANK CAR

IT'S EASY TO CREATE THE NO. 2465 LIONEL INTENDED TO BUILD

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LYLE LEVERICH

**S**tudying postwar Lionel catalogs, I found myself paying close attention to the No. 2465 Sunoco double-dome tank car introduced in 1946. It's such a common car that few of us really think about it — unless we are searching for the scarce version from that year equipped with flying shoe trucks and decorated with its bright yellow decal in the center of the body shell and not the left end.

Examining different examples of the 2465 tank car and its successor (No. 6465 introduced in 1948), I wondered why there was a rail support on the ends *and* why the rail supports on the sides were spaced unevenly? I found the answer when I returned to the consumer catalog for 1946.

Artwork of the 2465 showed the railings were intended to wrap around the ends and there was supposed to be a (prototypically correct) ladder going up to each dome.

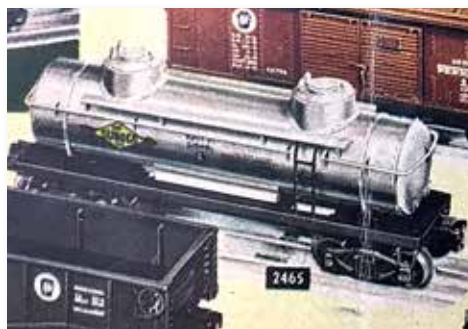
I decided making a mock-up of the detailed 2465 would be enjoyable, and I think you'll have an easy time with this project.

I began by obtaining a 2465 Sunoco tank car that was in bad shape and then put on the ladders. The ladder I found to be a perfect fit for the space between the frame and the upper walkway was a Lionel No. 715-10 from the prewar era. You can pick up an original part, but lots of reproductions are available from parts dealers and online. I got mine from Jeff Kane at the Train Tender ([ttender.com](http://ttender.com)).

I stripped the paint and decals from the body shell. Then I carefully drilled holes for the ladders, repainted the tank, and applied reproduction decals.

When I was assembling the car I discovered that adding the ladders and railings made it harder to put together. The

ladders must be kept in the holes while inserting and tightening the two mounting screws. Keeping the railings in the rail supports while I was bending the part inside the tank was also tricky. Now I understood why Lionel decided to simplify a tank car that became a component of so many early postwar sets. **CTT**



This view of the author's completed project shows exactly where he placed the ladders and the railings. Using reproduction parts makes this project simple and inexpensive.





O GAUGE  
LAYOUT WITH  
MUCH TO  
TEACH

# *Inspiration* FOR ALL AGES

STORY BY ROGER CARP // PHOTOS BY MEMORY MONTAGE PHOTOGRAPHY

**T**he list of adjectives that can be applied to the finest O and S gauge layouts is long and familiar. “Appealing” and “beautiful” work, as do “realistic” and “fantastic,” depending on the display’s appearance and operation. Other layouts can be praised as “smooth-operating” and “superbly designed.”

But a different word comes to mind when considering the 10 x 20-foot three-rail layout built by Art Volz. After listening to him share the background of his display and everything it has achieved, you’re left believing this is an O gauge railroad that should be called “inspiring.”

Why? Because Art’s decision to launch work on the first railroad of his adult life

can touch us in meaningful ways. It has much to teach newcomers and veterans about creating a fulfilling O gauge layout.

## UNCERTAIN FUTURE

About a decade ago, Art reached a turning point in his life, a moment virtually all of us have faced or will face. After spending more than 40 years carving



**1** Passengers traveling west along the elevated line on Art Volz's 10 x 20-foot O gauge layout may wish they could get off their train to relax along the shores of the lake where residents spend summer days canoeing, swimming, or fishing.

out a rewarding career, he was preparing to retire. Art had been employed first as a pastor in youth and family ministry and then as a chaplain at a retirement community. The hectic schedules and myriad activities that had characterized his everyday life were about to give way to unstructured hours and wide open days.

Fortunately for Art (and, he would add, his spouse, Arlee, and their adult children, Jonathan and Julee), he had watched residents of the retirement community he served confront that dilemma. He had seen them struggle to shape their future and find out how to map out a course that offered enjoyment and mental stimulation while deepening feelings of self-esteem.

So Art started examining retirement months before it became official. Debating what he might do to fill the now available winter days indoors, he felt pulled back to a hobby that had brought him pleasure more than half a century earlier. He began thinking once more about toy trains.

Equally as fortunate, when Art mulled over how O gauge railroading might enrich the next stage in his life, he was thrilled to discover the Lionel engines and rolling stock he had played with as a boy survived. After his parents had died and he was tasked with getting their home ready to be sold, he found the stacks of musty boxes holding his old trains, track, transformers, and more.

After 55 years in storage, the trains could still do their tricks. Unbelievably glad to have his postwar favorites at his disposal, Art thought he had discovered an enjoyable hobby that would contribute to some of his retirement years.

## DAD KNEW BEST

The close relationship Art had forged with his father during the 1940s and '50s never ebbed. Though the elder Volz had died long before Art contemplated retirement, it seemed like he had introduced Art to toy trains precisely to help his son avoid boredom during his senior years.

Art's dad was a career military officer stationed in Alaska with his family in the years after World War II when he presented his young son with a Marx O-27



Not long after receiving his first electric train for Christmas of 1947, Art (center) posed with two playmates. They look amazed at what the little Marx set can do.

electric train. From the moment Art gazed upon the engine and its cars racing around a figure-8 beneath the family's Christmas tree, he was enraptured by the marvelous toy. There was no turning back now.

At every stop during the Volz family's odyssey, Art and his father devoted leisure hours to constructing three-rail displays. Almost immediately, their Marx train was replaced with the additions of Lionel locomotives and freight cars.

A 4 x 8-foot layout completed in Nebraska was doubled in size before Art's dad received his next assignment. Before long, the father-and-son team was operating Nos. 1656 steam switcher, 2020 Turbine, and 2343 Santa Fe F3 diesels over an 8 x 15-foot empire in Illinois. As Lionel often stated: Building a model railroad

would surely cement the bonds between the generations. Art knew it was the truth.

So it made sense to him to find that around the time he turned 11, his father had packed away the trains rather than donating them to a charity or selling them. He understood that at some point in the future, his son would need them.

## PREPARING THE ROOM

When Art felt ready to start on the layout pictured in his brain, he had to figure out where to build it. No large attic or empty bedroom was available; all he had to use was the crawl space underneath the house.

Art says, "Our house was built on a hillside. Consequently, instead of a basement as the lowest level, we had a crawl space about 7 feet in height toward the downhill side of the house. The width of the room was determined by one of the open stud walls supporting the main floor, as well as the outermost wall."

An area that had seemed superfluous to Art and his wife assumed importance. He therefore had everything finished and a concrete floor poured the entire length of the space while another wall was added.

Readers who question the relevance of Art's experience with their own circumstances should continue on, since what he did deserves to be studied.

First, Art insulated all the walls as well as the ceiling before covering everything with ½"-thick OSB (oriented strand board) plywood for both comfort and temperature control.



**2** A freight winds out of the tunnel bored into Mount Snoqualmie. The realistic evergreen trees are Art's handiwork. He fashioned them over a few winters.



**3** Art understood the challenges he had to deal with after retiring in 2009 from a long and fulfilling career. He wisely decided to revive his interest in toy trains.

Second, Art hired an electrician to install additional wall outlets and a sufficient bank of fluorescent lights overhead. Ample lighting was essential.

Third, Art nailed sheets of Masonite to the walls. He extended them down from the ceiling 48" before curving them around three corners of the room.

Fourth, Art painted the ceiling and walls a light shade of blue. He did so to match the sky in the commercial backdrops he had purchased from Backdrop Warehouse. The idea was that the two blues would later connect.

Fifth, having decided the main level of the layout would stand 41" off the floor, Art knew just where to glue the backdrops to blend with the areas painted blue. There are four murals, each 3 x 12 feet, glued side by side to form one continuous and realistic landscape, consisting of forests, mountains, and sky.

Sixth, Art constructed a solid benchwork made up of a U-shaped table supported by 4 x 4 legs and connected to the walls with 2 x 4 stringers spaced 16" apart. For the surface, he used ¾"-thick particle-board.

### TRADITIONAL PREFERENCES

Whether Art's rationale was a respect for tradition or merely a familiarity with postwar items, his choices for track, switches, and transformers hearkened

back to his youth. What he had used with his father still struck him as adequate.

As a result, after gluing sections of ¾"-thick cork roadbed to the smooth and solid tabletop, Art laid tubular straights and curves over the 10 x 20-foot area. The vast majority of pieces were O-27 items, many left over from his boyhood. O gauge sections, though larger, seemed less realistic to him.

Art's wish to create an attractive network inspired him to paint the sides of all his track a rusty color. He also arranged additional ties fabricated out of pieces of tempered hardboard he spray-painted black to look like aging, oil-soaked wood. He carefully fitted them between the metal ties that came with all the vintage sections as they had been manufactured.

Patiently pouring light gray ballast from Woodland Scenics around the main lines and sidings came next. Art made sure to take his time and keep it all neat. He selected blackened granules when ballasting track in his big rail yard.

If conventional control had provided Art and his father with everything they had desired in the 1950s, he saw no reason to abandon it now. "It was simple to install," he stated, "and reminded me of how I ran my trains as a kid."

At the control panel, Art wired three postwar transformers, ranging in size and power from Nos. 1033 and 1034 all the

way up to a mammoth type-ZW. He wired his vintage and modern remote-controlled right- and left-hand switches to single-pull double-throw (SPDT) spring-return toggle switches installed on the control panel. New and old, they all came from the Lionel catalog.

### FINAL ELECTRONICS

Art will be the first to admit that his knowledge of electronics and wiring lagged far behind what he knew about the Old and New Testaments. It was time, he told his family, to advance his education by reading books and watching videos about wiring a model railroad, soldering feeders, creating electrical blocks, and similar topics.

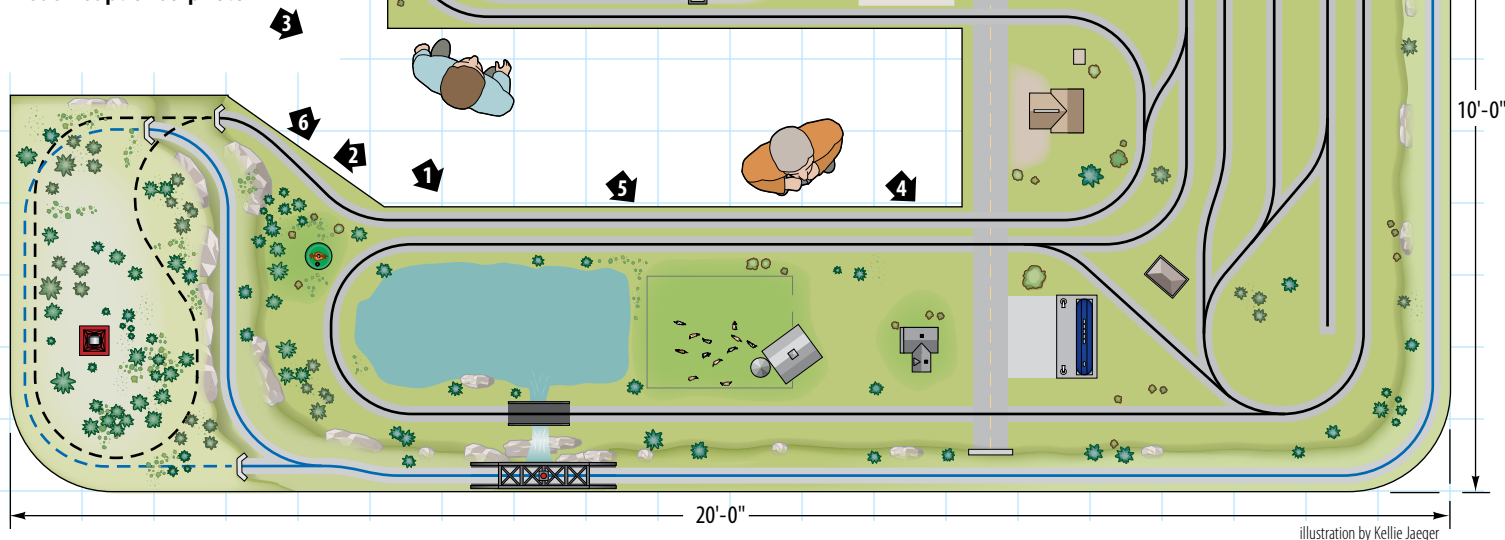
If the three-rail layout being showcased here represents the fruits of Art's labors, well, suffice it to say he passed his final examinations with flying colors!

Under each of the two main lines, Art ran a pair of 12-gauge bus lines. One pair went to the UD terminals on his ZW; the other went to the UA terminals. In addition, he soldered 24-gauge feeders to the main lines and the bus lines at every 6'. Art placed an insulating pin every 3' on each side of the feeders. "Essentially," he said, "each 6-foot block of track had its own power source."

The same thin 24-gauge wire connected the various Lionel and MTH accessories to the 1033 and 1034 transformers. Art connected the assortment of



Traditional tubular track and postwar transformers have influenced the look and operation of Art's layout, intended to keep alive his memories of growing up with Lionel trains. The numbered arrows correspond to the numbers in each captioned photo.



**4** Models of classic automobiles from the late 1940s and '50s look at home in the parking lot of Maddie's Roadside Diner on an April morning in the Cascades. Art took a Lionel No. 24243 structure and renamed it after one of his grandchildren.

lights to a couple of 18-gauge bus lines with 22-gauge wire, half to the UB terminals on the ZW and half to the UC terminals. He wrapped each soldered connection with electrical tape. "It's old-school," he confesses, "but it works."

Anything else? "Don't overlook the three spurs in my rail yard and the one

turnout off a main line that I blocked," Art said. "To each of the feeder wires connecting power to those blocks, I ran a pair of 24-gauge wires to a single-pole single-throw toggle switch on my control panel. That lets me turn off power to any of the blocks. Some of those SPST switches once belonged to my dad."

## AT A GLANCE

**Name:** Art Volz's O-27 gauge layout

**Dimensions:** 10 x 20 feet

**Track and switches:** Lionel (diameters range from 27" to 31")

**Motive power:** Lionel (postwar, modern)

**Rolling stock:** Lionel (postwar, modern), Menards

**Controls:** Lionel Nos. 1033 and 1034, type-ZW transformers

**Accessories:** Lionel, MTH

**Structures:** Atlas O, Lionel, Menards, MTH, scratchbuilt, Woodland Scenics

**Vehicles:** Ertl, Lucky Die Cast Products, MTH, SpecCast Collectibles

**Figures:** Bachmann Industries, Woodland Scenics

## MOUNT SNOQUALMIE

Scenery turned out to be another satisfying stage for Art. The highlight was creating a miniature version of a well-known landmark for drivers heading through the Cascades along Interstate 90 in Washington: Mount Snoqualmie.

Art intended to develop a towering landform with a rural coal and logging settlement nearby. He began by constructing an elevated line 11" above the tabletop.





**5** The Lionel No. 2020 Turbine pulling a freight train next to the farm on Art's display dates from his youth. Building layouts with his father brought them closer.

Trains would enter a tunnel in the mountain at that height, travel through the rear, and emerge on the opposite side to travel back across the outer face to join a switch near the original entrance before drifting down the 2.5% grade to the tabletop.

Once Art had decided on the elevated track and how it would run into the mountain, he finished the wood foundation and added a ¼" mesh wire screen (sold commercially as hardware cloth). Next, Art put on strips of plaster cloth from Woodland Scenics, followed by joint compound and Hydrocal. Rubber molds by Woodland Scenics helped him add some rock faces.

Art painted the hardened shell with diluted light gray acrylic paint. Brushing on a coat of India ink diluted with isopropyl alcohol created shadows and enabled cracks and crevices to stand out. Vegetation went on next, including coarse green turf and a forest canopy.

## TREES AND WATER

Over several winters Art made almost 200 trees from scratch: two types of deciduous trees and two types of evergreens. Some of the deciduous trees started as plastic armatures from Woodland Scenics that Art painted brown. He added poly fiber from the same firm, over which he sprinkled shades of fine green turf held in place by hairspray. Other deciduous trees began with Art twisting together strips of fine wire to form the trunk and branches.

He then painted the wire armatures and covered them with the same materials.

For one type of evergreen, Art first laid varying lengths of hemp fiber between two parallel wires and spun them with an electric drill fitted with a hook. He then trimmed, shaped, and coated them with layers of fine green turf adhered with hairspray. The base of the tree was fitted into a hole drilled into the end of a dowel already scored and stained.

For the second type, Art relied on furnace insulation cut into squares and layered onto stained dowels sanded to a point. Next, he trimmed and shaped the squares before coating them with layers of fine green turf.

Making the logging pond required Art to cut a hole in the tabletop 8 inches in diameter. He covered the hole with a board screwed to the underside of the surface, leaving a ¾" depression that he coated with joint compound and painted blue. After arranging pebbles and sticks, Art poured two ⅛" layers of Realistic Water from Woodland Scenics.

Construction of the lake, which measures 32" x 46", differed only in that the base was painted lighter shades of blue and green and had coarse turf along the banks. This time, Art simulated the water with Enviro-Tex Lite two-part resin water from Scenic Express.

## PROUD TO SHARE

For a man of the cloth taught to remain humble and lead a modest life, Art just can't resist expressing pride in everything he has accomplished on his 10 x 20-foot layout. He likes directing visitors to the vintage track he used, the forests of handmade trees, and the dependable operation ensured by his excellent wiring.

Art prizes opportunities to share his railroad with friends and family members. The latter, especially his grandchildren, love coming over and checking out the structures named after them. Every one of them has a business, industry, station, or other attraction with their name on it.

How successfully Art designed and constructed his first adult layout ought to inspire everyone who has never built a toy train display to give it a try. That is particularly true for hobbyists looking ahead to their retirement years. What Art has achieved and how he shares it offer inspiration to all of us. **CTI**



**6** Art can't help but wonder whether the hobos, looking so happy eating and singing by a campfire, wish they were riding the freight train to visit their families.





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# Fun with the Frosty Bar

STORY AND PHOTOS BY GILES DYELLE

CREATE  
UNIQUE  
STRUCTURES  
USING  
PLASTICVILLE  
PARTS



If you've been in the hobby for a while, you probably have a box of incomplete Plasticville buildings. One of the more common structures is the Frosty Bar. Believe it or not, I had two partial Frosty Bar structures on hand, so I decided to make two projects, filling in missing parts with items from my scrapbox and around the house. You also can make an enhanced Frosty Bar and a newsstand fashioned in a style similar to the American Flyer and Lionel versions.

**Rosebud's Newsstand does a brisk business near the station. Make your own version using Plasticville parts and pieces from your scrapbox.**

## Frosty's Dairy Bar

■ For Frosty's Dairy Bar, I had no sign, base, or stools. I added a cardstock base, hiding the cut edge with  $\frac{1}{16}$ " vinyl chart tape, (available online from My White Boards), push pins for stools, interior equipment detail, and checkerboard flooring and lights (which the original never had). I painted the interior equipment plus what was molded on the countertop.

For the exterior front signage, I modified a Plasticville billboard, adding

snowscape made from white felt, blue sparkly cardstock, and signage made from computer-generated lettering. I finished it with a Frosty the Snowman tree ornament and called it Frosty's Dairy Bar.

The interior details came from leftover plastic model parts and other bits and pieces from around the house. The ice-cream containers are cylindrical desiccant (silica gel) containers, often found in bottles of

medications. For the lighting I used grain-of-wheat bulbs (available online), ideal for adding lighting to any building on your layout.

**The author added interior details using cardstock, silica gel containers, push pins, and other scraps from around the house. Note the grain-of-wheat lighting taped to the interior roof. You could also use stick-on LED lighting, available from Woodland Scenics and other model retailers.**







After adding the cardstock counter, Giles spray-painted the frame with Krylon No. 488783 ColorMaxx Emerald Green. Next, he drilled two small holes near the top front to create a rack for magazines.



Sign lettering was printed on the computer, and the sleds were Christmas decorations. You can modify the magazines and newspaper dates to suit your the era your layout is modeling.

## Rosebud's Newsstand

■ For Rosebud's Newsstand I used Frosty Bar parts. I had to create the front counter from cardstock and build it to the angle of the original. The over-the-counter hang rail for the publications is from K&S Precision Metals, some .047" music wire, and a pack of 3 12" rails (available from your

local hobby store). I drilled a small hole at the top of each side wall to provide the needed support. (By the way, this kind of wire is also excellent for adding handrail detail to your engines and diesels.)

On my computer, I found newspapers and magazine covers from the 1950s and

'60s and reduced them in size to the right scale and printed them out on a sheet of cardstock. To attach the magazines to the hanging rack, I used double-sided tape. I created a stack of newspapers, folded them, and placed them on top of a magnet and held down by a smaller magnet. I

made a magazine display from balsa.

I added grain-of-wheat bulbs and two model sleds from our Christmas decorations box. I use computer-generated lettering printed on cardstock for the signage. Now Rosebud's Newsstand was ready for business! **CTT**



The humble Plasticville U.S.A. Frosty Bar kit can inspire any number of projects, even if you're missing pieces. You'll find plenty of great ideas in this Weekend Workshop.



The signage for Frosty's Dairy Bar is made from cardstock, felt, and a Christmas ornament. The small structure fits nicely in one corner of the author's O gauge home layout.

# SPOTLIGHT ON THE PENN CENTRAL AT LIONEL

MODERN-ERA ROLLING STOCK HONORED A RECENT MERGER

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRENDON DEATRICH



**W**hen General Mills began making Lionel trains after 1969, executives aimed to add new and contemporary railroad names to the O gauge roster. One of the most notable of them was the Penn Central, the product of an ill-fated merger between the New York Central and the Pennsylvania RR in 1967.

The Penn Central has been modeled by Lionel across its entire range of products. However, it was the Model Products Corp. division of General Mills that released the first four cars in 1970 and '71. Those models, which came out after the end of the postwar era, feature many carryover parts.

## 9201 AND 9211 BOXCARS

First to appear was the No. 9201 Penn Central boxcar released in 1970. One of the earliest entries in the No. 9200 series, the model had been made in ways similar to what Lionel had done with its landmark No. 6464 series of near-scale boxcars.

For one thing, the 9201 even featured the classic Lionel "L" on the trucks, reminiscent of the AAR trucks used by the toy train manufacturer during the 1960s. For another thing, the graphics on the 9201 realistically followed those on full-size PC boxcars. The body shell, like the two sliding doors, was painted Jade Green.

In 1970 and '71, the first years that General Mills had licensed the rights to manufacture and market Lionel O gauge trains, it released four attractive models painted Jade Green and decorated in white with the name and graphics of the Penn Central.

A year later, MPC re-released the Penn Central boxcar, with its number changed to 9211. In addition, silver doors replaced the green ones, a move that enhanced the appearance of the new model and matched what was being done with other offerings for 1971, including the Nos. 9202 Santa Fe and 9215 Norfolk & Western boxcars.



Lionel used the 9211 PC boxcar in its No. 1187 Service Station Special set for 1971. According to multiple sources, the Jade Green car pictured with MPC Timken trucks and metal door guides had a production run of only 1,000 units, which makes the 9211 a desirable variation.

### 9300 UNLOADING CAR

While MPC marketed the two PC boxcars toward collectors, it catered to operators with a fun take on the postwar No. 3362/3364 operating unloading car. The No. 9300, introduced in 1970 and cataloged through 1975 and again for 1977, was the first operating car offered by General Mills. The Jade Green car kicked off a series of operating models, all equipped with so-called Timken trucks.

Early examples of the 9300 had different loads, such as postwar helium tanks or large wood logs. Instruction sheets could vary from a leftover helium car sheet to different MPC versions. Bins included with the 9300 unloading car are interesting as well, as some have leftover stampings, while others come with the postwar number yet still have an MPC logo on top.

The 9300 unloading car was included in starter sets, notably the No. 1182 Yard Master (cataloged for 1971). Early separate-sale versions came in a unique Banner Box with an illustration rather than a cellophane window. This style was carried over to the No. 9121 Scraper Dozer flatcar, albeit in a larger style box.

### 9062 CABOOSE

Lionel cataloged the 9062 Penn Central Caboose in 1970-72 and 1974-76. That inexpensive yet attractive model used the classic Southern Pacific-type body.

The 9062 first appeared in the No. 1083 Pacemaker steam freight set for 1970, paired with the No. 8041 New York Central 2-4-2 Columbia steam engine in silver and red. A year later, the PC caboose was carried over into the No. 1183 Silver Star steam freight set, the first with Mighty Sound of Steam. A No. 8141 Pennsy 2-4-2 Columbia steamer and tender led the set.

Early versions of the 9062 PC caboose, which used Timken trucks, showed how MPC had made improvements to the inexpensive postwar models from the late 1960s. For example, the PC model boasted a fully detailed molded plastic chassis, separately applied end platforms, and smooth rolling fast-angle wheels.



MPC originally planned to issue another operating Penn Central car. The illustration of Midnight Express diesel freight outfit No. 1087 in the 1970 consumer brochure included a satellite-launching PC car that was never produced.

### COULD HAVE BEEN!

One final note about what just might have been for the Penn Central. The brochure put out by MPC to promote the first Lionel trains made by General Mills showed the No. 1087 Midnight Express diesel freight outfit. Among the pieces of rolling stock pictured in the top-of-the-line set was a Penn Central satellite launching car.

Sadly, MPC canceled the operating car and the set. That was too bad, because the satellite launching car indicated how strong was the desire at General Mills to

present new road names, colorful paint schemes, and more innovative features in hopes of revitalizing the Lionel line.

Without a doubt, the release of these four Penn Central cars, a road name that became an icon of 1970s railroading, represented an intelligent way to pump new life into the Lionel brand at a critical moment in its history. They stand out for that reason and helped launch a unique and entertaining selection of products that would continue to help Lionel reinvent its image in the many years to come. **CTT**



The pair of Penn Central boxcars captured the most interest from Lionel collectors. They differ in product number, color of their doors, and elements of their graphics.



## GREEN, RED, OR GRAY

# 631

STORY BY ROGER CARP // PHOTOS BY CODY GRIVNO

### INTRODUCING AMERICAN FLYER'S FIRST POSTWAR GONDOLAS

Postwar toy train firms might discuss whether to catalog an open hopper or a stockcar. They might debate the number of domes on their tank car and the style of their caboose. But none of the key players after 1945 — the A.C. Gilbert Co., the Lionel Corp., or Louis Marx & Co. — expressed any hesitation about gondolas. Planners agreed those basic models were essential.

What made gondolas so vital to S and O gauge toy train makers? For one thing, those models proved fairly simple and inexpensive to produce in enormous quantities. For another, they were popular with youngsters because kids could use them in many ways. Better than running gondolas empty, boys and girls might fill them with marbles, blocks, sticks, gravel, die-cast metal or plastic figures, or Tinker Toys.

Time, therefore, to shine a spotlight on the gondola that broke ground in 1946 for the American Flyer brand of S gauge trains developed and marketed by the Gilbert Co. The No. 631 car served as a set component as well as a separate-sale item through 1953, arriving in dark green, bright red, or possibly even gray.

#### UNPAINTED PLASTIC

The year 1946 was a big one for the Gilbert Co. Besides being able to put out a full lineup of toys ranging from Erector Sets to Mysto-Magic outfits, the toy maker in New Haven, Conn., announced that its American Flyer brand would be designed as S gauge products built to a 1:64 ratio.

Steam locomotives last cataloged prior to World War II, including an Atlantic, a Hudson, and a Pacific, reappeared to lead S gauge trains. Also, a

variety of new pieces of rolling stock went into production to fill the sets. Among the newcomers was the 631.

Engineers and product supervisors completed the design of the gondola. They concluded that the body shell of the 631 was going to be fabricated out of dark green injection-molded plastic, a novel material rapidly changing life.

Creative minds at Gilbert completed a shell with many neat and realistic cast-on features. As noted in the first volume of *Greenberg's Guide to American Flyer S Gauge*, brake cylinders and frame center sills appeared on the underside of the shell. A corrugated ladder distinguished each of the two ends; a brake-wheel platform stood out on one end. Sides boasted ladders, rivets, and vertical bracing. A lip with corner braces ran around the top of the sides and ends.

Factory workers added to each plastic body shell a pair of Type 1 sheet-metal trucks with die-cast metal journals and thin-shank link couplers lacking weights. Otherwise, the gondolas lacked add-on extras, notably brake wheels.

#### BIG, BIG NAME

Interesting choice for the road name lettered in white across each side above all the car data ("CAPACITY 100000 LBS. / LOAD LIMIT 123500 LBS. / LT. WT. 45500 NEW 4-28"). Someone decided the name of a small regional railroad with a big name that stretched the imagination would be perfect: Texas & Pacific.

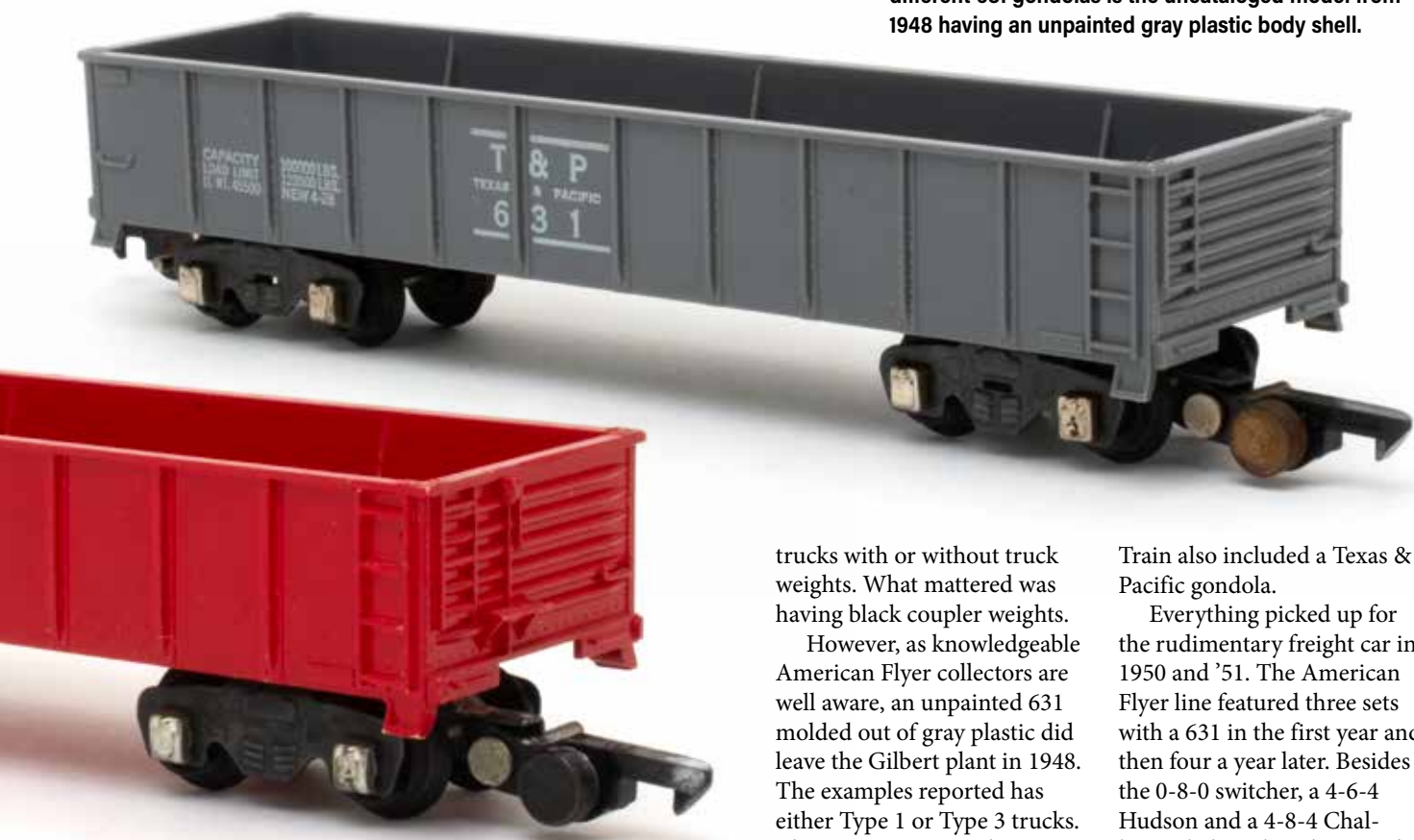
The fact that the T&P never came close to reaching the Pacific must not have bothered anyone at Gilbert. The expansive nature of the railroad's name did the trick. But planners creating the first group of





◀ The No. 631 Texas & Pacific dark green gondola made its debut in 1946 and remained part of the Flyer line through 1953, when the Gilbert Co. phased out the final models with link couplers.

▼ The scarcest and most desirable variation among the different 631 gondolas is the uncataloged model from 1948 having an unpainted gray plastic body shell.



▲ Besides being offered as a separate-sale item, the 631 gondola (shown here with a red plastic shell) went into the work trains led by versions of the Nickel Plate Road 0-8-0 switcher.

cataloged sets unexpectedly skipped over the 631 gondola when putting cars behind engines in freight sets. Instead, they deemed the T&P gondola appropriate for only their single work train, the No. 4618 four-car set headed by a No. 342 Nickel Plate Road 0-8-0.

Incidentally, the 631 was also assigned to the spectacular No. 4622 American Flyer Complete Railroad System cataloged in 1946 and again one year later. The massive item, with two train sets and several accessories, was everything a kid might desire.

#### COVETED VARIATION

Unpainted dark green Texas & Pacific gondolas continued to

be made by the thousands for sets and as separate-sale models. Minor alterations were made by Gilbert technicians. Link couplers with a thick rather than a thin shank were associated with cars manufactured in 1947. A year later, modified sheet-metal trucks (identified as Types 2 and 3) were substituted. They might come with truck weights with embossed "PA 11304"; brass coupler weights did become the rule during 1948 production. None of those changes affects the values of the 631s.

Neither did the changes identified with unpainted dark green 631 gondolas made between 1949 and 1952. They could have Type 2 or Type 3

trucks with or without truck weights. What mattered was having black coupler weights.

However, as knowledgeable American Flyer collectors are well aware, an unpainted 631 molded out of gray plastic did leave the Gilbert plant in 1948. The examples reported has either Type 1 or Type 3 trucks. This scarce variation has reported values many times greater than those of the unpainted green gondolas.

#### PAINTED CARS

For the three years starting in 1949, when unpainted dark green plastic 631 Texas & Pacific gondolas were still being produced, so were painted models worth a bit more. Examples painted over green plastic have been documented, as have some painted over white plastic that had first been painted red. The latter variation, which is associated with the 1952 production year, has a higher value.

Between 1947 and 1949, Gilbert continued to make good use of the 631 in its sets led by a Nickel Plate Road 0-8-0 switcher (Nos. 4618 and 4730A). In the middle year, the No. 48T Royal Blue Freight

Train also included a Texas & Pacific gondola.

Everything picked up for the rudimentary freight car in 1950 and '51. The American Flyer line featured three sets with a 631 in the first year and then four a year later. Besides the 0-8-0 switcher, a 4-6-4 Hudson and a 4-8-4 Challenger led cataloged sets with a painted or unpainted gondola. The T&P had hit the big time!

#### END OF THE LINE

Life was running out for models like the 631 equipped with link couplers. Gilbert designers were working hard to develop a realistic knuckle coupler for their locomotives and rolling stock, and the first models with one arrived in 1952.

The only set to come with a 631 in 1952 was the No. 5107W, a four-car freight headed by a No. 365 Santa Fe Alco PA/PB duo. It had been introduced the prior year, so Gilbert could have been disposing of unsold inventory in 1952. The same point might be applied to 631 T&P cars shown in the catalog as separate-sale items during that year and even into 1953, when the link era came to an end. **CTT**

A layout you can build

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THREE-RAIL  
FAVORITE

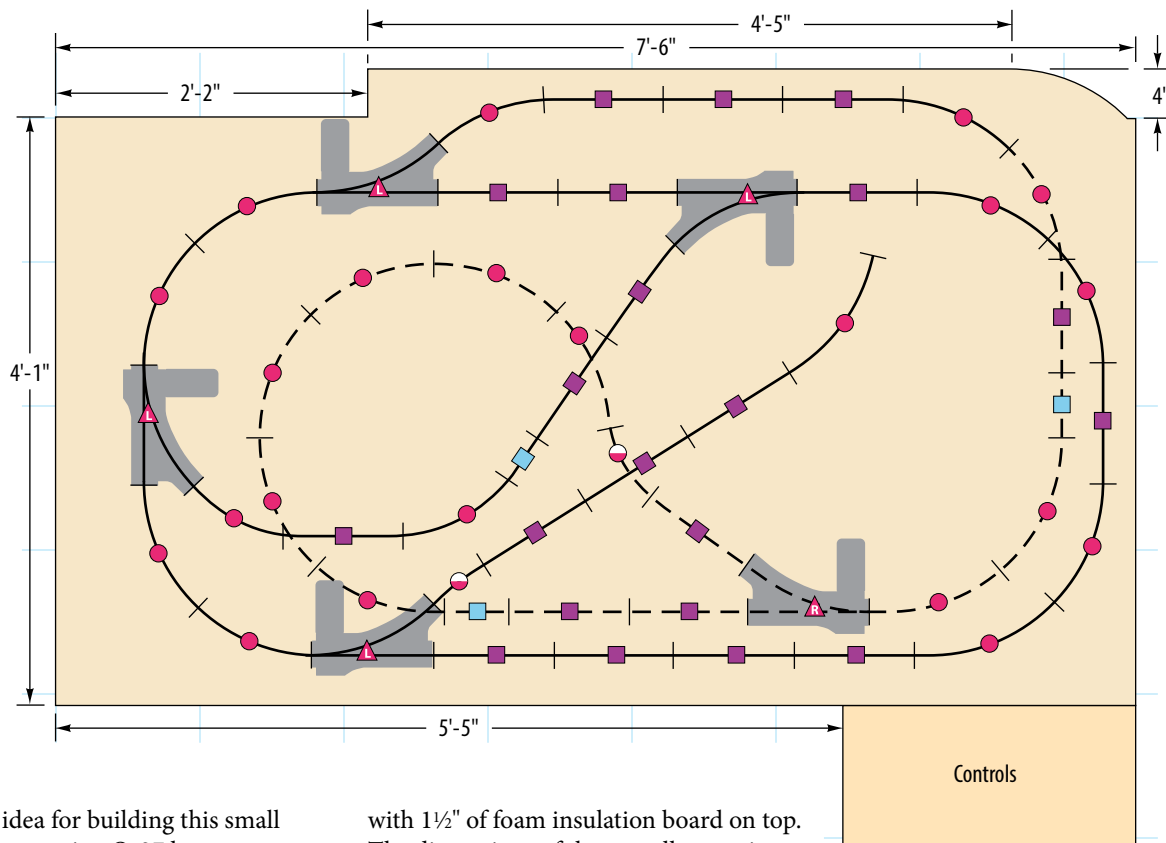
# DISAPPEARING MOUNTAIN LAYOUT

STORY BY BOB ESPENSCHIED // PHOTOS BY KIM GIACOBBE



The Santa Fe's *El Capitan* passenger train comes out of the right-side tunnel, near the construction site, on the author's O-27 tribute to Lionel's Disappearing Layout display.





The idea for building this small disappearing O-27 layout came to me after reading an issue of Lionel's *Inside Track* magazine from 2009. This track plan brought back for me memories of a similar O-27 layout at a department store during the holidays in the 1950s.

### GETTING STARTED

I built the layout's frame using 2 x 4 lumber and 1/4" plywood. I trimmed it using white pine. The top plywood is 3/4" thick

with 1 1/2" of foam insulation board on top. The dimensions of the overall operating layout started as basically 4 x 8 feet. However, I decided to modify the layout to 5 x 7 1/2 feet so it fit better in its final room.

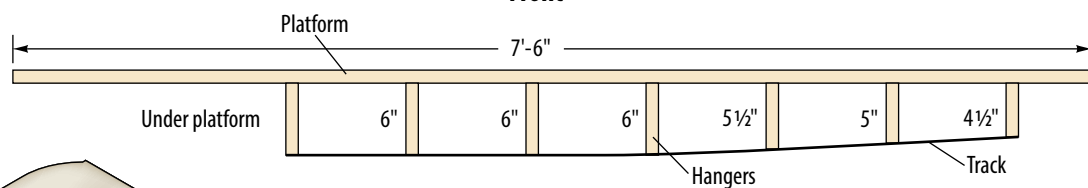
The track decline grade required for the train to go under the platform is 1/4" for every 12" of track. I placed three straight tracks before the curved track began.

The decline increased to 5 1/2" under the top of the platform to make it possible for my tallest locomotive and rolling stock to pass through. Check clearances using your

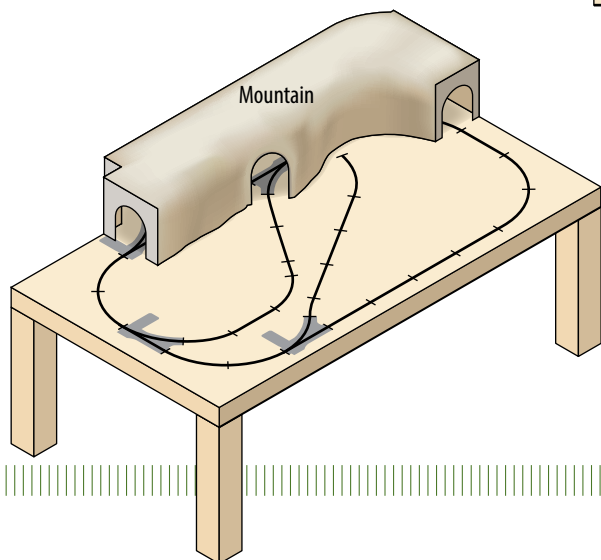
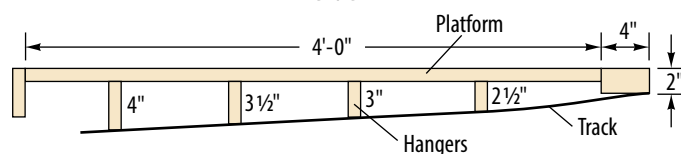
### LIONEL O-27 TUBULAR TRACK COMPONENTS

Quantity	Description/Number
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2	O-31 cut curve
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### Front



### Side



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# EXPLORE THE WORLD OF American Flyer and S Hi-rail with the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF S GAUGERS

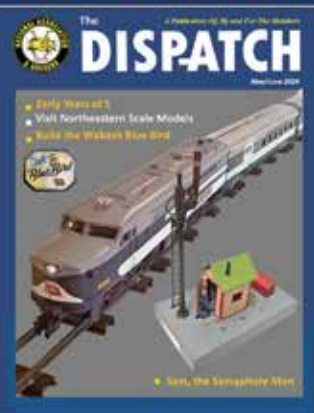


Photo by Austin Birkey



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There's a lot of action on this small 5 x 7½-foot "disappearing mountain" layout. The author controls his O-27 railroad with a Lionel type-ZW transformer that dates from the postwar period.

tallest rolling stock first. There are cutouts for the train to get to 5½" height under the platform board. I covered up the openings with landscaping.

Next, I framed the mountains, which I then covered with brown paper and plaster cloth. I painted them using green and brown paints. To complete the look, I added rocks and landscaping products. I also painted the inside of the tunnel openings black. [See a similar construction technique on p. 28. — *Editor*]

A switch with a reverse loop under the platform brings the train out the tunnel it entered. You'll need another reverse loop on top of the platform to send the train in

the opposite direction. I used five switches in all: two in the mountain (one for the decline and one for the reverse loop), one for the siding, and two others for the reverse loops.

A waterfall comes down the mountain, ending in a stream at the campground on the left side. A construction site is in the right front with a small farm located behind it. There's a window in the middle of the site that enables me to monitor the direction of the switch (see photo below).

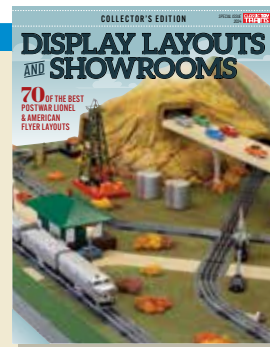
I assembled and painted the layout in my basement. Later, I had to disassemble it to move it upstairs, where I reassembled it in a room that's only 8 x 12 feet. **CTT**



The author added a window at the construction site so he could check on the direction of the switch located under the platform on the reverse loop.

## MATERIALS

- Acrylic paints
- Black curtain for back of mountain
- Cardboard strips
- Brown paper
- Lionel No. 022 switches (5)
- Lionel O-27 tubular track
- Lionel type-ZW transformer
- Plaster cloth
- Rocks (optional)
- Woodland Scenics scenery products



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### MAINTAINING MODERN VERSIONS OF LIONEL'S POULTRY DISPATCH CAR



The entertaining and collectible Lionel No. 3434 Poultry Dispatch Car from the postwar era has inspired a few modern versions. Keeping them working may take a little effort.

**Q** I have two modern Lionel operating cars based on the postwar No. 3434 Poultry Dispatch Car. One, the No. 29825 Postwar Celebration version of the 3434, has the figure suspended on the operating arm between two springs. On the other, a No. 16739 Looney Tunes Foghorn Leghorn Poultry Car, the operating arm appears to have been supported by a rubber band twisted in an "X" through two clip ears with the other end hooked onto a hanger above to suspend Foghorn inside the boxcar. Once I took the car out of its box, I realized everything was loose and the rubber band had deteriorated.

The instructions placed inside the box give no indication and offer no drawing of the operating mechanism, in particular the rubber band. Also, the only part listed on Lionel's website is the figure. Do you have any information about the size of the rubber band so I can try to replace it? — *Al Wussler, Smyrna, Ga.*

**A** new contributor, Bruk Bannister, recommends first identifying the Lionel part number for the rubber band as 610-9819-020. Unfortunately, that part number no longer comes up on the Lionel website, which means it's not being made. A replacement is a no. 10-size rubber band. You'll have to route it as pictured in **Fig. 1**. Lionel also used .005" piano wire; just twist it as shown in **Fig. 1**.

You may want to upgrade to a spring setup, which Lionel uses on newer versions of the Poultry Dispatch Car. Bruk recommends using Lionel part No. 600-0342-118. It isn't the exact part used on the newer items, but it should get you a good result. For tips on installing it, check out **Fig. 2**. Be sure to make any needed adjustments, just as you would have to do if you opted for what's shown in **Fig. 1**.

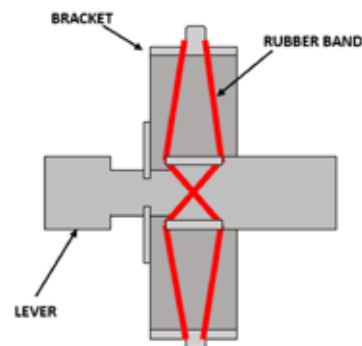


FIGURE 1

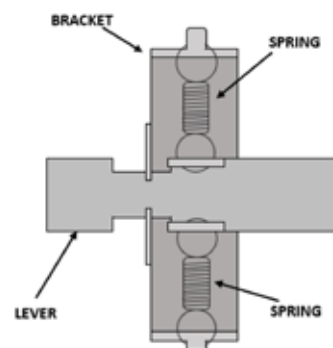


FIGURE 2

#### Paint scheme for Marx boxcar

**Q** Did the Great Northern Ry. ever paint a boxcar in the scheme being proposed for its merger with the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy; the Northern Pacific; and the Spokane, Portland & Seattle railroads to form the Burlington Northern in March of 1970? Did it letter the car "Great Northern Pacific & Burlington?" I want to use a Marx model to create an O gauge version of that proposed boxcar, so any information will help. — *Gary Anderson, Stephen, Minn.*

**A** Group Technical Editor Cody Grivno has found no evidence that the Great Northern ever painted a boxcar in the proposed merger colors

prior to the first day of operations on the Burlington Northern.

"The other three railroads," he adds, "did paint boxcars in shades of green leading up to the merger. The plan with the CB&Q boxcars was to add the word 'Northern' below 'Burlington.' The area right of the door was left blank so there would be room for a BN herald."

Cody goes on to say, "Some Northern Pacific freight cars were painted green, probably as experiments to determine how that color looked on equipment. There was no easy way to letter them for the Burlington Northern without repainting. The same was true for the Spokane, Portland & Seattle boxcars that were painted what was called 'pre-merger green.'"

#### Shells for an MTH SD60M

**Q** I have the MTH No. 20-2595-1 Premier Line Harley-Davidson SD60M freight set from around 2005. I ran it a few times before the circuit board fried. At the time, it was already out of warranty. I looked into having the board replaced, but it cost too much. More recently, I started looking into it again and was quoted \$300 to \$400 if the parts could be found.

I'm considering buying a used MTH locomotive and swapping the body shells or having the board swapped and reprogrammed. If I go with a shell swap, are all Premier SD60M frames the same? Can I use the donor frame of an SD40, SD50, or another engine



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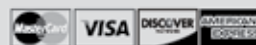
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## ■ ■ QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

equipped with ProtoSound 2.0 or 3.0?  
What about the frame from an MTH  
RailKing diesel locomotive?

Another idea: Do you think I should  
go outside the model railroad industry  
and have the board rebuilt by a computer  
tech? — Joe Salerno, Brooklyn, N.Y.

**A** According to Bruk Bannister, the  
MTH No. 20-2595-1 SD60M  
frame won't match up with either  
a Premier SD40 or a SD50 frame or a  
RailKing frame. The length of these  
models varies; also, the shells' mounting  
locations vary. They won't line up with  
the SD60M mounting studs on the shell.

Your best bet is to locate another Pre-  
mier line SD60M. Then it should be easy  
to swap body shells because they have  
the same mounting holes.

If you find an operating ProtoSound  
2.0 or 3.0 model of any of these diesels,  
you can transfer the internal electrical  
components (lights, tach reader, speaker,  
and ProtoSound 2.0 or 3.0 board/holder)  
to the dead SD60M frame you hope to



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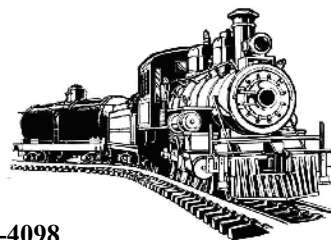
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bring back to life. In addition, you'll need to re-flash the chain code to the board and upload the correct sound file to it.

Another option is buying and installing an MTH No. 50-1911 ProtoSound steam kit. You can get them from MTH for \$200. According to the MTH database, your SD60M should have a ProtoSound 2.0 3-volt board. Bruk suggests the ProtoSound 3.0 steam kit because it uses the ProtoSound 2.0 3-volt connectors on the board. It's basically a plug-and-play with

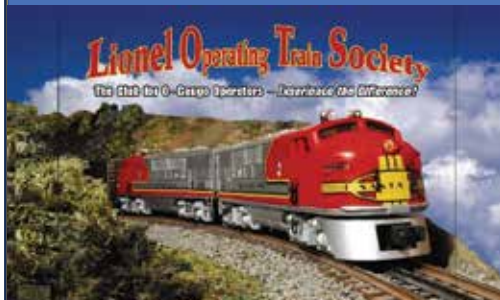
the original harness in your engine; therefore, it ought to be less expensive for you to install one of the steam kit than paying a technician to handle that task.

After installing the kit, you update the chain file and upload the correct sound file. One disadvantage of using the ProtoSound 3.0 kit is its lack of LED lighting, as opposed to the No. 50-1912 diesel kit with it. But it's a different board design and not a "drop-in." You may have to gut the engine and install everything.

One final thought from Bruk: You may consider changing the speaker, as well. In most cases, the ProtoSound 2.0 boards fail because the speakers fail and so take out the audio amp on the printed circuit board or even the entire circuit board.

These audio amps are not readily available anymore, which may be why you have to go to ProtoSound 3.0 or salvage another working board. After installing it, you must update the chain file and upload the correct sound file. Good luck. **CTD**

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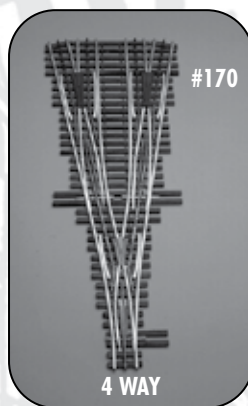
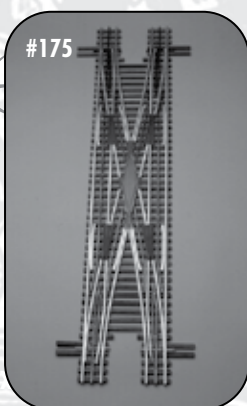
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3073588 UP Modern Tank Car .....	\$53.99
3073590 NASA Modern Tank Car .....	\$53.99
3074859 Reading '40 DD Boxcar .....	\$44.99
3074874 NS 50' DD Plugged Boxcar .....	\$47.99
3076749 CSX Center Beam Flat .....	\$50.99

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305217 War Bonds Bump-N-Go .....	\$69.99
305226 Transylvania Bump-N-Go .....	\$82.99
305228 North Pole Trolley .....	\$82.99
305229 Market St Trolley .....	\$69.99
305230 City Lines Trolley .....	\$69.99
305234 Christmas Oper Hand Car .....	\$69.99
305235 MOW Oper Hand Car (Tuscan) .....	\$69.99
305236 MOW Oper Hand Car (Orange) .....	\$69.99

### \*\*SALE ITEMS\*\*

#### O Locomotives

Lionel Locos below are sold without warranty

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1933563 Long Island FA Cab Car #608 .....	\$250.00
1933564 Long Island FA Cab Car #610 .....	\$250.00
1933748 Reading FB Powered B .....	\$315.00
1933749 Reading FB Superbass B .....	\$315.00
1933758 Santa Fe FB Powered B .....	\$350.00
2033061 Rail Logix SD38 #2001 .....	\$425.00
2033062 Rail Logix SD38 #2002 .....	\$425.00
2033600 Union Pacific SD70Ace .....	\$475.00
<b>Am Flyer LEGACY Locos</b>	
648191 Milw Rd U33C .....	\$300.00
192120X 1/2 Clinchfield U36C .....	\$350.00
192123X 1/2 SCL U36C .....	\$350.00
1921232 CSX U36C .....	\$350.00

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2022040 Manufactures Railway Set .....	\$719.98
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2122050 C&A John Bull Set .....	\$949.98
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2122070 ASA Packer Set .....	\$1979.98
2122170 Santa Fe Valley Flyer Set .....	\$1979.98
2122140 SF High Speed Set .....	\$2249.98
2222030 BNSF Hustle Muscle Frt .....	\$998.99
2222090 NS 40th Anniv Set .....	\$1299.99
2322010 LV Camelback Legacy Set .....	\$989.99
2322020 WM Hagerstown Hotshot Set .....	\$1199.99
2322030 Cumberland Valley Wayfreight .....	\$1349.99
2322040 Vision Big Boy Super Set .....	\$4049.99
2322050 Iron Hippo Legacy Set .....	\$2069.99
2322060 Union RR Hot Metal Train Set .....	\$1169.99

#### American Flyer Rolling Stock

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2019040 Frisco Freight Sounds Boxcar .....	\$99.99
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201906X 1/2 Buffalo Creek Boxcar .....	\$45.99
201907X 1/2 Great Northern Boxcar .....	\$45.99
201908X 1/2 GB&W Boxcar .....	\$45.99
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2119120 Senate Beer Reefer .....	\$48.98
2119160 Polar Express Searchlight Car .....	\$49.98
211920X 1/2 CSX Gondola .....	\$48.98
211926X 1,4,5 C&O Hopper .....	\$45.99
2119330 Continental Tank Car .....	\$48.99
2119340 Hercules Powder Tank Car .....	\$48.99
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2119360 Staroline Oil Tank Car .....	\$48.99
2219010 Alaska Oper Log Dump <b>SALE!</b> .....	\$74.99
2219020 BN Oper Log Dump Car <b>SALE!</b> .....	\$74.99
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2219072 1/2 C&O 2-Bay Covered Hopper .....	\$44.98
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# MTH Premier Santa Fe 4-8-4 No. 2926

HOW A RECENT ADDITION IMMEDIATELY BECAME A FAVORITE

BY LUCAS IVERSON



The MTH Premier line No. 20-3667-1 Santa Fe 4-8-4 No. 2926 quickly became a beloved engine for Trains.com Staff Writer Lucas Iverson.

## What toy train locomotive means the most to you?

It's a locomotive that's not a childhood treasure, let alone having been part of my O gauge collection for less than a year. While being on my radar for some time, it wasn't a model I prioritized searching for. Perhaps it was searching for me?

I'll admit that my Santa Fe 4-8-4 No. 2926 from the MTH Premier line (No. 20-3667-1) is both an odd and nontraditional choice. But how it came into my possession and what I've learned so far to value it makes this toy train locomotive mean the most to me.

### HOW DID YOU ACQUIRE IT?

Visiting a model train forum in late April of 2023 led to my learning about an online store in the Midwest that specializes in inventory from former collectors, estates, and out-of-business hobby shops. Sites such as Trainz.com are usually the "go-to" when searching for items that are no longer in production. However, I've learned that smaller online stores keep options open with gems you may not find on bigger sites.

Browsing through this online store, the listing of the MTH Premier Santa Fe 4-8-4 No. 2926 (modeled after the operational 1:1 counterpart) caught my attention.

Other than shelf wear on the box, the locomotive, tender, and accessories were accounted for and screamed new from the photographs and information presented. According to the listing, the odometer from an MTH DCS handheld remote read 2.1 scale miles of runtime. A discount bumped the MSRP to well below \$1,000.

Some readers may think this could've been a "too good to be true" circumstance. Model railroading usually involves rolling the dice on costly products, whether new or used. I pulled the trigger and made the purchase while hoping that what arrived at my doorstep wouldn't turn out to be a lemon. This mammoth locomotive in the 1:48 realm has been like enjoying a tall glass of sweet lemonade.

### WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL?

Big steam on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Ry. has always stood out for me. The acquisition of the No. 2926 led me to a terrific read of Lloyd E. Stagner's article, "Thirty Years of 4-8-4s" in the

February 1987 issue of *Trains Magazine*. I have gained an appreciation of what the 3700-class brought to the table for the ATSF and how the later 2900s enhanced the might of the 4-8-4s, all the way to the end of steam on the railroad.

Introduced to the Premier line with ProtoSound in 1995, the MTH Santa Fe 2900s (scale and semi-scale models) became a regular part of the firm's product lineup through the late 2010s. Much has changed since then, with MTH downsizing in May 2021. Lionel picked up the mantle for the 2900s by acquiring the tooling, with a recent release powered by its Legacy technology. With my No. 2926

having been part of the final run in 2016 and 2017, I see footnotes of MTH's history etched in the model.

Besides enjoying my own model, I'm taking interest in what's taking place with the real-life Santa Fe No. 2926 in Albuquerque. The locomotive has seen the first miles of operation in 2023 since its restoration at the hands of the New Mexico Steam Locomotive & Railroad Historical Society (DBA New Mexico Heritage Rail). **CTT**

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This section is open to anyone who wants to sell or buy toy trains merchandise. CLASSIC TOY TRAINS reserves the right to edit undesirable copy or to refuse listing.

**Word Rate per issue:** 1 insertion – \$1.06 per word, 4 insertions – 92¢ per word, \$35 minimum order per issue. Payment must accompany the ad. To receive the discount you must order and prepay for all ads at one time. Count all initials, single numbers, groups of numbers (i.e. 4-6-4 or K4's), names, address number, street number each as one word. Example: R. Meister, 400 E Depot Ave., Waukesha, WI 53187 would count as 8 words.

**Events Rate:** \$45 per issue (55 word maximum). Ads will contain the following information about the event: state, city, sponsoring organization and name of event, meet, auction or show, dates, location, times, admission fee, name and/or telephone number and/or email of person to contact for information. Name, daytime telephone number and street address of the

person providing the information is also required but need not be included in the ad. Unless otherwise requested, ads will be published in the issue month that the event occurs in. Additional months are available at the \$45 per issue fee. Please specify issue date(s).

All copy is set in standard 6 point type. First several words only set in bold face. If possible, ads should be sent typewritten and categorized to ensure accuracy.

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## Events

**CA, ANAHEIM:** 2024 TTOS-SP Super Meet. December 13-14, 2024. Friday, 5-8pm; Saturday, Noon-6pm. Brookhurst Community Center, 2271 Crescent Ave. Buy-Sell-Trade Trains, Toys, and Railroad Memorabilia. Train races, super raffle, and more! FREE kids train set raffle Saturday. 2-day admission: \$5/person, \$10/family. FREE parking. Vendors: 8-ft tables, \$25, \$30 after 12/01. Visit: [TTOS-SP.ORG/THESUPERMEET/](http://TTOS-SP.ORG/THESUPERMEET/) to register. Questions: [info@ttos-sp.org](mailto:info@ttos-sp.org)

**CA, CARMICHAEL:** Sac-Sierra TCA Toy Train Show. Elks Lodge, 5631 Cypress Ave., Carmichael, CA 95608. Saturday, October 5, 2024, 10am-3pm. Admission \$10.00, children 12 and under FREE w/paid adult. Buy/Sell/Trade, operating layouts, free parking, food. Free train set drawing for 17 and under (must be present to win). Contact: Bryan Stanton at [brsta@comcast.net](mailto:brsta@comcast.net)



**CT, ANSONIA:** Classic Shows, LLC will hold a Train and Toy Show on Sunday, November 3, 2024, from 9:00am-2:00pm at Warsaw Park, 125 Pulaski Hwy (Route 243), Ansonia, CT 06401. Admission \$6.00, children 15 and under are free with an adult. For information, please call 203-926-1327 or go to: [www.ClassicShowsLLC.com](http://www.ClassicShowsLLC.com)

**CT, NEW HAVEN:** Classic Shows, LLC will hold a Train and Toy Show on Sunday, December 8, 2024, from 10:00am-3:00pm at the Annex YMA Hall, 554 Woodward Ave., New Haven, CT 06512. Admission: \$6.00, children 15 and under are free with an adult. For information, please call 203-926-1327 or go to: [www.ClassicShowsLLC.com](http://www.ClassicShowsLLC.com)

**FL, MELBOURNE:** The Melbourne Train and Toy Show. Azan Shrine Center, 1591 West Eau Gallie Blvd, Melbourne, FL 32935. Saturday, December 7, 2024, 9am-2pm. Admission: \$5, kids under 10 FREE. Vendor tables \$25 each or 3 or more \$20 each. Join us for trains, toys, and fun! Lunch/snacks available. For more information: [SchultzSpaceCoastTrains@aol.com](mailto:SchultzSpaceCoastTrains@aol.com) or 321-805-1963

**FL, OCALA:** Lions Tri-Annual Train Show. First Christian Church, 1908 E. Fort King St., Ocala, FL 34471. Saturday, November 2, 2024, 9:00am-2:00pm. Model trains, accessories, detail parts and toys. Admission \$5.00, children 12 and under free w/paid adult. Bring two canned goods and receive \$1.00 off admission. Food/snacks available. Information: Bob 352-694-6381 or cell 352-547-0938

**FL, PINELLAS PARK:** Suncoast Model Railroad Club Train Show/Open House. Saturday, December 14, 2024. SHOW- New venue! Pinellas Performing Arts Center, 4951 78th Avenue N., Zip: 33781. 9am-3pm. Admission: \$8.00, Children \$3.00, under 11-free. Free parking. Food/snacks. Tables: Event Planner, [smrrclub@gmail.com](mailto:smrrclub@gmail.com), 727-523-1860. OPEN CLUBHOUSE: 12355 62nd Street North, Suite A, Largo, FL 33773. Admission: FREE. [www.suncoastmrrc.com](http://www.suncoastmrrc.com)

**IA, HAMPTON:** NCIMRRC Train Show. Franklin County Convention Center, 1008 Central Avenue W., Hampton, IA 50441. Sunday, October 27, 2024. 9:00am-3:00pm. Admission \$5.00, 10 and under free with paid adult. Trains (all scales), memorabilia and collectibles to buy, sell and trade. Individual tables welcome. For information or table reservations contact, Eastside Trains, 641-456-1998, email: [eastsidetrains@gmail.com](mailto:eastsidetrains@gmail.com)

**MA, TAUNTON:** OLD COLONY MODEL RAILROAD CLUB 24th ANNUAL MODEL RAILROAD SHOW & SALE. Taunton Inn and Conference Center, 700 Myles Standish Blvd., Taunton, MA 02780. Exit 25 off Route 495. Sunday, September 15, 2024, 10:00am-3:00pm. Adults \$5.00, children under 12 & scouts in uniform FREE. For more information contact Dennis Ingalls, email: [dingalls@comcast.net](mailto:dingalls@comcast.net) or call 508-558-9883

**MI, EAST LANSING:** Lansing Model Railroad Club Show and Sale. Michigan State University Pavilion. Sunday, November 10, 2024, 10:00am-4:00pm. Admission \$8.00, under 12 free. Michigan's largest train show: layouts, demonstrations, and 500+ tables. Free parking. Flyer, table forms and map, visit: [www.lmrc.org](http://www.lmrc.org) or call Ron St. Laurent 517-256-3588

**MN, ST. CLOUD:** GRANITE CITY TRAIN SHOW AND SALE. River's Edge Convention Center, 10 4th Ave S, St. Cloud, MN 56301. Saturday, November 16, 2024. 9:00am-3:00pm. \$6.00, Kids 10 and under FREE. Buy/sell model/toy trains, books, videos, railroad collectibles. Operating model and toy train displays. Win a LIONEL train set! 612-558-6484; [GraniteCityTrainShow@gmail.com](mailto:GraniteCityTrainShow@gmail.com) or visit [www.GraniteCityTrainShow.com](http://www.GraniteCityTrainShow.com)

**MO, ST. LOUIS:** 33rd Annual Greater St. Louis Metro Area Train Show by Mississippi Valley N Scalers. NEW LOCATION and DATE! Meramec Community College Gym, 11333 Big Bend Rd., Kirkwood, MO 63122. October 5-6, 2024, Saturday 10am-4pm; Sunday 10am-3pm. Admission: \$10, kids 12 and under FREE! All scales-swap tables-layouts-grand prize drawing! Free parking. David Johnson, 636-225-2405, <http://mvns.railfan.net>

**NC, RALEIGH:** Neuse River Valley Model RR Club 40th annual FALL TRAIN Show; NC State Fairgrounds, Exposition Center, 4825 Trinity Road; November 9-10, Sat 9-5; Sun 9-4. Admission: \$10 covers both days, children 12 and under free w/adult. 400 tables of model railroading, 6 operating layouts. Contact Bob Witwer [bobwitwer@gmail.com](mailto:bobwitwer@gmail.com), 919-632-0785; Visit [www.nrvclub.net](http://www.nrvclub.net). Follow us on Facebook.

**NJ, BRICK:** ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents The Brick Train Show. Elks Lodge, 2491 Hooper Avenue, Brick, NJ 08723. Sunday, September 29, 2024, 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: \$7.00; under 12 free with adult. John LaLima 732-845-5966. Go to [www.eastcoastrainparts.com](http://www.eastcoastrainparts.com) and click on The Brick Show.

**NJ, EAST RUTHERFORD:** METCA/NYSME All Gauge Train Show. November 2, 2024. St. Joseph's School, 120 Hoboken Road, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. 9am-2pm. METCA/NYSME members admitted free at 8am, public at 9am. Admission: \$5.00 per person 16 and up. Layouts, refreshments, and door prizes. For tables and information, contact the NYSME Office at 201-939-9212 or email: [contact@modelengineers.org](mailto:contact@modelengineers.org)

**NJ, WAYNE:** ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents The Wayne Train Show. P.A.L. Hall, 1 Pal Drive, Wayne, NJ 07470. Sunday, October 27, 2024, 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: \$7.00; under 12 free with adult. John LaLima 732-845-5966. Go to [www.eastcoastrainparts.com](http://www.eastcoastrainparts.com) and click on The Wayne Show.

**NY, HAMBURG:** TCA Upstate NY Chapter Toy Train and Collectible Toy Show! St. Mary's of the Lake Church Hall, 4737 Lakeshore Rd. (Rt. 5), Hamburg, NY 14075. Saturday, September 28, 2024. TCA Members: 8:30am, General Public: 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: Adult \$5.00, Children 12-17 \$3.00, Upstate Chapter Members & children under 12, free. Contact: Mike 716-913-4195, Email: [tca.upstatenychapter.events@gmail.com](mailto:tca.upstatenychapter.events@gmail.com)

**NY, LINDENHURST:** Long Island Classic Train Show/Swap Meet. Fireman's Memorial Park, 555 Heling Blvd. (north of Hartford St.), Lindenhurst, NY 11757. September 22, 2024, November 3, 2024, January 5, 2025 and February 9, 2025. 8:30am-1:00pm. Adults \$5.00, under 16 free w/adult. 100+ tables. Handicap accessible. Contact: John Mitchell 917-596-3494 or John Miata 516-353-1751. Email: [LIClassicTrainShow@hotmail.com](mailto:LIClassicTrainShow@hotmail.com)

**NY, POUGHKEEPSIE:** Train & Hobby Show of the Hudson Valley. November 10, 2024. 10am-3pm. MJN Convention Center, 14 Civic Center Plaza, Zip: 12601. Model train vendors, operating layouts, raffles, kids ride-on railroad, free parking. Vendor Tables \$45 each, Public & Family Discount Tickets all online at: [www.midhudsonciviccenter.org/event/train-hobby-show-of-the-hudson-valley/](http://www.midhudsonciviccenter.org/event/train-hobby-show-of-the-hudson-valley/) Visit the preeminent fall show in the NY/NJ/CT metro area!

**OH, DAYTON:** 48th Original Dayton Train Show. The New Montgomery County Fairgrounds, 645 Infirmary Road, Dayton, OH 45417. November 2-3, 2024. Saturday 11am-5pm and Sunday 11am-4pm. Admission: \$8.00 per adult, children 12 and under free with paid adult. Gail Yarnall, PO Box 341233, Beavercreek, OH 45434, 937-424-6413. Email: [NMRA.Div.3@gmail.com](mailto:NMRA.Div.3@gmail.com) or visit: [www.DaytonTrainShow.com](http://www.DaytonTrainShow.com) for updates.

**OH, MASSILLON:** CJ Trains Winter Train and Toy Show. Massillon Knights of Columbus Hall, 988 Cherry Road NW, 44647. Sunday, December 15, 2024, 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@sssn.net](mailto:cathijon@sssn.net) or [www.cjtrains.com](http://www.cjtrains.com)

**OK, CHICKASHA:** Fall Train Show. Saturday, October 12, 2024, 9am-3pm. Grady County Fairgrounds, 500 E. Choctaw Ave., Chickasha, OK 73018. Across the tracks from Rock Island Depot. BUY/SELL/TRADE. Operating layouts and door prizes. Admission: \$5.00 per adult, kids under 18 free w/paid adult. Sponsored by the Heartland Toy Train Association. For further information visit: [www.heartlandtoytrain.org](http://www.heartlandtoytrain.org)

**PA, ALLENTOWN:** ATMA First Frost Train Meet. Allentown Fairgrounds Agri-Plex, 1925 W. Chew Street, Allentown, PA 18104. November 9 & 10, 2024. Saturday 9am-4pm, Sunday 9am-3pm. Advance tickets \$15, admitted at 8am. At the door, admitted 9am: \$10 adults, 12 and under FREE with adult ticket purchase. For more info, visit: [www.allentowntrainmeet.com](http://www.allentowntrainmeet.com) or call 610-442-2859

**PA, BEAVER FALLS:** BLRHS Fall Train Show. Saturday, October 12, 2024, 10:00am-3:00pm. Chippewa Township VFD Social Hall, 2568 Darlington Rd., Beaver Falls, PA 15010. Admission: \$5.00 (\$4.00 if you mention Classic Toy Trains ad). Children 12 and under FREE. Tables \$25 each. For show info: [www.blrhsinc.org](http://www.blrhsinc.org). For table reservations: Tom Bianculli, [tbian64@gmail.com](mailto:tbian64@gmail.com) or 412-585-3614

**PA, HAWLEY:** Model Train Show & Sale. Hawley Fire Department, 17 Columbus Ave., Hawley, PA 18428. Sunday, September 29, 2024, 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission \$3.00, under 12 free with adult. Only 88 tables available. Bill Dellling, 618 Fern St., Hawley, PA 18428, 570-226-3206

**PA, YORK:** The Barry King Memorial Train Show. Reliance Fire Hall, 1341 W. Market St., York, PA. Mon-Wed, October 14-16, 2024. 9am-5pm, Open to the public, free admission. All gauges of trains and vintage toys. 8-ft. tables for all 3 days are \$60 ea. For information contact Todd or Bev Metcalf 860-432-2124 or email: [trainmore@aol.com](mailto:trainmore@aol.com)

**TX, SEABROOK:** TCA Toy Train Show. Saturday, September 21, 2024, 10:00AM-3:30PM. Bay Area Community Center, 5002 E. NASA Pkwy., Seabrook, TX. Hosted by the Gulf Coast Chapter of the Train Collectors Association. Operating Layouts, Buy/Sell/Trade trains of All Gauges. Door Prizes/Train Raffle/Food Concession. Admission \$10.00 Individual, \$13.00 Family. Contact Mark Heavener 281-728-8505, or Steve Tripp 281-734-3794. [www.TCA-gulfcoastchapter.org](http://www.TCA-gulfcoastchapter.org)

**VA, SPRINGFIELD:** Northern Virginia Washington, Baltimore & Annapolis Chapter - Train Collectors Association Train Show. Greater Springfield Volunteer Fire Department, 7011 Backlick Road (off Franconia-Springfield Parkway). Saturday, September 21, 2024; 9:00am-2:00pm. Adults \$5, Free - WB&A members, youth under 12 free with paid adult, Scouts in uniform. INFORMATION: Ron Edwards; [ronedwards2@hotmail.com](mailto:ronedwards2@hotmail.com); 703-440-5823. Visit: <https://wba-tca-eastern.org/home>

**WA, LONGVIEW:** November 23, 2024. LK&R Model Railroad Club presents our 2024 Holiday Model Train and Toy Swap Meet. NEW LOCATION - Cowlitz County Event Center, 1900 7th Ave. 10am-4pm. Admission \$5.00. See [www.cceventcenter.com](http://www.cceventcenter.com), click on Contact Us for directions. Over 150 tables. Information for vendors and guests, visit: <http://lkrtrains.yolasite.com> or contact Howard Flick. 360-751-7276, email: [flickh@yahoo.com](mailto:flickh@yahoo.com)

**WA, SPOKANE:** River City Modelers Fall Train Show. Spokane Fairgrounds, 404 N. Havana. Sunday, October 13th, 9:30am-3:30pm. Admission: \$8 for adults, 12 & under free. 200+ tables of Railroad-related items for sale, operating layouts, Free-MO, Operation Lifesaver & more. Free Parking. For table rental or general info, contact: Shirley Sample, 509-991-2317 or email: [shirley@busnws.com](mailto:shirley@busnws.com)

**WI, MONROE:** Green County Model Railroaders 46th Annual Model Train Show & Swap Meet. The Stateline Ice and Community Expo, 1632 4th Avenue West, Monroe, WI 53566. September 28-29, 2024. Saturday & Sunday, 10am-4pm. For information contact Kevin Johnson, 608-558-9332, or visit [www.gcmrrinc.org](http://www.gcmrrinc.org)

*All listed events were confirmed as active at the time of press.  
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## American Flyer Freedom Train

Bill Clark celebrates the 2008-09 releases by Lionel of Flyer's S gauge Freedom Train, which replicated the first Freedom Train that crossed the country in 1947-49.



## Louise Express Christmas layout

VeryIn and Louise Noring celebrate Christmas all year on their layout. Read the story of how their layout was built and view photographs of the many Department 56 items and classic postwar Lionel accessories on the layout.



## Install figures on passenger cars

Trains.com Staff Writer Lucas Iverson shows you how to add figures to Lionel's modern 21" passenger cars. It's easier than you might think!

# Repairs for Marx four-wheel plastic cars

**LOUIS MARX & CO. INTRODUCED** four-wheel plastic cars in 1952 for its lower-priced train sets. Eight-wheel versions from the same molds followed later for mid-priced sets. The four-wheel cars are more fragile, and since the cheaper sets were more likely to wind up in the hands of small children, the survival rate of these cars is not great.

Two of the most common areas to be found broken on the four-wheel cars are the simulated truck sides (known as “truck facades”) and the bars supporting the couplers. Gondolas, flat-cars, and crane cars have the couplers riveted to the car bodies, but all the other types of rolling stock have coupler-support bars. These coupler-support bars are often found missing, and truck sides can have pieces broken out.

When coupler-support bars break off, you’re left with a drooping coupler (**Photo 1**). I have two methods for handling the necessary repair: Make a notched spacer to snap on the coupler pin or construct a new coupler-support bar.

For the spacer, use any sort of round flexible plastic lid from a food product. (**Photo 2**) Cut out a circle about  $\frac{7}{8}$ " in diameter and make a hole about  $\frac{3}{16}$ " in diameter in the center. Now cut a notch with slanted sides on one side of the piece, allowing the end at the  $3\frac{3}{16}$ " hole to be a little narrower than this hole. The spacer should snap into place and yet still be easy to remove.



This Marx four-wheel plastic car has its coupler-support bar and simulated truck side intact and ready to use.

## SUPPLIES

Flexible plastic lid from a food container

Sheet styrene, such as Evergreen .080" and .125" (if needed)

Testor's Cement for Plastic Models (No. 290278)

Utility knife

Sanding stick

Paint

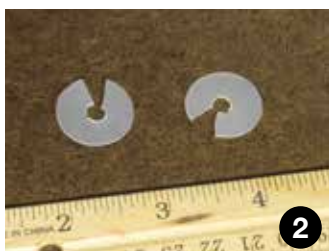
If you look at the end of the coupler pin, you’ll see it was melted into place by Marx to secure the coupler. Install the plastic spacer between this melted end and the coupler (**Photo 3**). This will reduce or correct the coupler droop. If the coupler needs to come up higher, install another spacer. I had to use three spacers on the end of one freight car.

Fabricating a coupler-support bar involves cutting, grinding or filing plastic of a similar thickness, and gluing it into place. I use Evergreen sheet styrene and Testor’s Cement for Plastic Models.

I make the bars in three sections, including the two little projections coming down and then the bar itself under these (**Photo 4**). On a couple of cars, the original bar was  $\frac{1}{8}$ " thick, but I used an .080" sheet of styrene with success. Lastly, I painted everything to match (**Photo 5**). — Mike Small



This Marx four-wheel plastic car has a broken coupler-support bar as well as a damaged truck side. It’s ready for repair!



The author began his project by cutting these circular spacers made from the lid of a plastic food container.



He next added a spacer on the coupler pin between the coupler and the head of the pin to hold the coupler higher.



Then it was time to add a new coupler-support bar made from sheet styrene. He also glued in a section of simulated truck side.



This model has a new coupler-support bar fabricated in three sections (the main bottom piece and the two small projections coming down to it). The repair was painted to match. This bar is .080" thick, whereas the original was .125" thick.

**Want to share?** Write to “Tips” at Classic Toy Trains, 18650 W. Corporate Dr., Ste. 103, Brookfield WI 53045 or email [tips@classictoytrains.com](mailto:tips@classictoytrains.com) and put the word “tips” in the subject line. We pay \$25 upon publication for any tip we publish unless it was in a previously purchased article.



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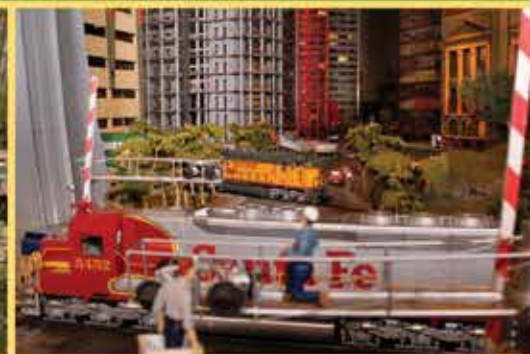
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